

Memoirs of a Geisha Study Guide

Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden

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Plot Summary

Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden is a novel which surrounds the life of the main character Chiyo, who is also known as Sayuri (once she becomes a geisha). It is an account of a young girl from a fishing village called Yoroido, located on the Sea of Japan whose mother is very ill and whose father cannot fathom what he will do when he is left alone to look after two young girls by himself. One man provides a solution, but it is never clear whether the father understands the entire truth of the arrangement he enters into. Mr. Tanaka runs the largest company in town – the Japan Coastal Seafood Company. He becomes aware of this family and their situation when he meets young Chiyo for the first time. He can already see what a lovely young woman she will be one day, and he begins to plan even then. Mr. Tanaka tells Chiyo a story about himself and how as a child he lost his parents to death. He was adopted by a wonderful family who gave him every opportunity in life, and he assures her that this could be in her future as well. In fact, not long afterward, he goes to see her father and makes arrangements for both girls to come and spend the night with him and his family, presumably to see if they would like the home and family. Chiyo is thrilled, but Satsu merely follows along, doing as she is told. The first indication that something may be amiss is when Mr. Tanaka invites a doctor to come and examine the girls. The examination includes confirmation that they are both still intact, but young Chiyo doesn't understand the implications of such an examination, telling herself that this nice man merely wants to ensure they are completely healthy before taking them on. She has no idea that to him she is merely a commodity who will soon be sold to an okiya where she is expected to one day become a geisha. Events unfold quickly, and the girls are picked up again soon after this overnight visit, but they are not taken back to Mr. Tanaka's home. Instead, they arrive at a train station where they are handed from one virtual stranger to another, fed nothing, and travel all day to face a new life. Chiyo is separated from her sister Satsu the minute they arrive in Tokyo. Chiyo is the lucky one of the two sisters, with exotic good looks that makes becoming a geisha a real possibility. Satsu is sold to another house where she is trained in the art of pleasing a man physically. *Memoirs of a Geisha* follows Chiyo through her adjustment to the okiya where she is dumped to her eventual adoption by the woman she knows only as Mother – the woman who runs the okiya. This is not a move made out of love or sympathy. It is strictly a business proposition and ensures that all money made by Chiyo in her new life as Sayuri will stay with the house. Of course, the benefit to Sayuri is that one day she will stand to inherit all that the Nitta okiya has, but until then she is a leaf subject to the winds that blow. First, she is trained in the arts of entertaining from playing instruments to dancing and performing tea ceremonies. Once she is ready, she is dressed in the proper garb of an apprentice geisha. Next, she is attached to an 'older sister' by way of a tea ceremony. The older sister will teach her what she needs to know. Then, she is prepared for her mizuage ceremony. This is the ceremony that signifies that her virginity has been sold to the highest bidder. Once she has had her mizuage, she can try to attract a danna. A danna is the man who will pay her expenses and buy her gifts in return for the pleasure of her company whenever he calls. It is a life of servitude, with little to look forward to, but Sayuri dreams. She dreams of attracting the attentions of a single man – the Chairman.



Chapters One and Two

Summary

On the day that Chiyo-chan learns that her mother will die within weeks, her father sends her to the village to get incense for the Buddhist altar that rests on a crate at the entrance to their kitchen. It is the only item of any value in the house. Once in the village, she slips and falls on the wet roadway, giving herself a bruised lip. She is taken into the Japan Coastal Seafood company where Mr. Tanaka assures her she is okay before sending her home. She buys the incense and goes home to where her sister, Satsu, makes soup for dinner. Afterward, their father goes to the village to watch Japanese chess played by other fishermen. Chiyo tells her sister that she doesn't want her mother to die, but Satsu doesn't appear to hear her.

As a distraction the next morning, Chiyo goes swimming at an inland pool. Satsu comes as well, wearing a bathing dress constructed from her father's old fishing clothing. On her way home, she sees her sister. Sugi's son is touching her breasts and she hides, embarrassed. Mr. Tanaka comes up behind her, and after calling out to scare Sugi's son off, tells her to take a package of Chinese herbs home to her mother. At first he suggests that she give them to Satsu to give to their mother in tea, but when he tells her they are precious, she admits that perhaps she should make the tea as her sister could be clumsy. About a week later she comes home and overhears a conversation between Mr. Tanaka and her father in which he suggests that his girls come with him to the nearby town of Senzuru. They go with him the next day, and once there, he turns them over to an old woman whom Chiyo calls Mrs. Fidget. The old woman examines them. Mr. Tanaka takes them to his home where Chiyo meets his daughter Kuniko for the first time. As they are about the same age, they get along well. They spend time in Kuniko's forest playhouse where Chiyo decides that she might really enjoy having a sister like Kuniko. As it grows dark, they wash and then sit down to an extravagant meal. When they are done, Mr. Tanaka leaves and after a moment, Kuniko follows her father to the teahouse as she does every night, this time with Chiyo in tow. They take turns watching him through a hole in the wall, and Chiyo notices that he pays little attention to the stories told by the geisha like the other men do. His entire focus is on one geisha who Chiyo doesn't think is particularly pretty. After a while the girls go home and take a bath together. The servants help them out. Satsu is already asleep when they lie down on the futons beside her. Kuniko is asleep almost right away as Chiyo tries to sort out the day in her mind.

Analysis

Chiyo is devastated when she hears Dr. Miura tell her father that their mother has only a few weeks to live. Somehow, Chiyo had never contemplated the idea that her mother would actually die. Though it was true she slept a great deal, and when she was awake, she seemed to be in constant pain, it had never occurred to Chiyo that they might not



go on like that forever. She couldn't imagine life without her mother, despite the fact that her sister Satsu looked after most of her mother's chores now anyway. When her father sends her to the village for incense, she falls on her face and is taken off the street by Mr. Tanaka himself. He makes sure she is okay and listens as Chiyo explains that she lives in the tipsy house and that her mother was ill. He assures himself and Chiyo that she is okay, and he tells her that she is beautiful. Then, he sends her on her way. She thinks about that encounter all the way home. Stopping before she reaches home, she repeats his name over and over again.

On her way home from swimming at the local pond, Chiyo happens to see Sugi's son playing with Satsu's breasts. She is so embarrassed that she hides and waits for them to leave so that she can go home. Mr. Tanaka comes up behind her and scares him off. He gives her some herbs for her mother and tells her they are special. Then he tells her a story about himself as a boy. His father and mother died, just a year apart from each other, and his brother left for Osaka. He was taken in by the Tanaka family. He was only twelve at the time, and he suggests that maybe something like that will happen to her.

Their conversation plays over and over in her mind, and she is surprised when she comes home to hear him talking to her father about a week later, asking him if Satsu and Chiyo can come and live with him. The next day, he takes them to his town of Senzuru, telling them they will come and spend the night with him and his family. An old woman examines them intimately to determine whether or not they are still virginal. Mr. Tanaka takes them home where Chiyo meets his daughter, Kuniko. Chiyo likes her instantly. They play for the afternoon, and all in all, she fears the transition much less. She is surprised when after dinner Kuniko follows her father to the teahouse, telling Chiyo she does it every night. They watch him for a while through a peep hole. Chiyo is surprised by the attention he pays to one not so pretty geisha. Chiyo finds it hard to sleep, despite the warmth of the futon shared with Satsu and Kuniko. The events of the day are swirling in her mind.

Discussion Question 1

What does Chiyo overhear that changes her perceptions of her life and whose conversation reveals this information?

Discussion Question 2

Whom does Chiyo meet that will affect her life forever from that day forward, and how do they meet?

Discussion Question 3

What does Chiyo think her future holds for her and why is she under that impression?



Vocabulary

translucent, hoisted, unrecognizable, consequences, extraordinary, agitation, syllable, persistent



Chapters Three and Four

Summary

Chiyo and Satsu return home the next day. While Satsu works in the village, Mrs. Sugi helps Chiyo bathe her mother. A few weeks later, Mr. Sugi catches up with Chiyo on her way home and tells her that Mr. Tanaka wants her and Satsu to come down to the village as soon as possible. Chiyo tells her father, and Satsu takes off her apron and leaves without a word. Her father nods, and Chiyo hurries to catch up with her sister. Mr. Tanaka is unusually cold, and tells the girls to ride in the back while he and Mr. Sugi ride in front. Satsu says nothing as they travel to Senzuru, but this time the wagon stops near the train tracks where Mrs. Fidget is waiting with a man named Mr. Bekku. Mrs. Fidget takes them to one side and hitting them on the top of their heads, she tells them that she will make them pay if they do anything to embarrass her. She insists that they will do whatever Mr. Bekku tells them to. When Chiyo says nothing, she pinches her hard, making her whimper and bringing Mr. Tanaka to their side. He objects to her treatment and Chiyo hardly has time to sort out what Mr. Tanaka says as Mr. Bekku ushers her and Satsu onto the train. The trip by train is many hours during which they are given no food or explanations. When Satsu cries, she is struck, and Chiyo stifles her own feelings quickly. Chiyo is dropped off first, with hardly a chance to say goodbye to Satsu. She is given to a woman at an okiya in the district of Gion. Hatsumomo is just leaving when they arrive, and she refuses to step out until Mr. Bekku drags Chiyo back out of the way outside. After she leaves, Mr. Bekku disappears with Satsu, and Auntie introduces herself. She tells Chiyo the rules, explaining that the one she needs to impress is Mother because Granny doesn't like anyone. Mother is dressed in a kimono so lovely that her face is a shock at first. She manages to be quiet while Mother and Granny decide her fate. Mother makes it clear that it is Granny who will dole out any punishment she requires and that it would be in her best interest to simply do as she is told.

Pumpkin tells Chiyo that when she begins her training, she will learn the proper way to sing, and she'll be taught music, dance, and the tea ceremony. Chiyo decides that if she learns quickly, she may meet up with her sister again in school, convinced that she is another okiya as well. She does all the chores asked of her without complaint. The worst of her assignments deal with looking after Granny, and she learns to dread her call. For Granny, much like with Hatsumomo, she can do no right. When Hatsumomo catches Chiyo cleaning her room, she tells her that by touching her makeup jars when she dusts, she transfers her fish stench to them and then to Hatsumomo. Then she remembers that Satsu had been by and left word as to where she was staying for Chiyo. When Chiyo begs her for the information, Hatsumomo slaps her hard. When Mother sees Chiyo's face, she confronts Hatsumomo, who tells her that Chiyo was talking about running away, so she was disciplining her on Mother's behalf. It is a month before Chiyo begins her training as a geisha in school. Pumpkin is told to introduce her, and her anxiety where school is concerned is quickly revealed. The teachers are rigidly strict and tolerate little that interferes or deviates from their teaching.



Analysis

To Chiyo, her mother seems to have become even sicker in just the one day that they have been gone. During the next weeks, Chiyo sleeps little, in constant fear of what the future holds. She only manages to sleep at all by convincing herself that if her mother died, her father would naturally be adopted by Mr. Tanaka as well. When they are taken to the train station and forced to board with Mr. Bekku instead, the look of anguish on Satsu's face is almost more than Chiyo can bear. Mr. Bekku pays them little attention, except to utter disgustedly that they stink of fish. An old woman asks and Mr. Bekku tells her they are going to Kyoto. When Satsu cries, she is struck, and Chiyo stifles her own feelings quickly. When they arrive, Chiyo is stunned by the sheer size and volume of people who are around. They board a rickshaw – one of twenty or so who are waiting outside the station – and Mr. Bekku gives the man carrying them the address. They stop outside an okiya where Mr. Bekku dumps Chiyo before leaving again with Satsu. Chiyo is devastated. She crumples to the floor in the entrance way and sobs, wondering if she'll ever see her sister again. Soon, the woman who identifies herself as Auntie returns and informs her that no one will cook or eat her. Feeling only partially reassured, Chiyo decides to do as she is told. Auntie sees her eyes for the first time, exclaiming that Mother will be thrilled with her. Then, she instructs Chiyo as to the proper behavior that must be observed, or she is likely to be evicted – a fate which she suggests would be much worse. Chiyo asks where she is, and Auntie tells her that this is an okiya where geishas live. If she works very hard, she may become one as well. Mother is as ugly to look at as her kimono is beautiful. In short order, her immediate fate is decided, and behavioral warnings delivered.

Granny hated to be alone, and as such, required constant attention. Massaging her was one of Chiyo's worst chores because as a younger woman, Granny had also been a geisha and had used a lead based makeup called China Clay. Now, years later, she suffers from its poisonous effects which caused a yellow dye when combined with the hot springs she frequented. Nothing was worse than an encounter with Hatsumomo, who took great pleasure in emotional and physical abuse of Chiyo and the others whom she considered beneath her. Unfortunately, this behavior was excused by all others who catered to Hatsumomo's every whim. Mother explained that it was up to all of them to be as helpful to Hatsumomo as possible to facilitate her ability to do her job as a first class geisha. When Chiyo asks her if she knew of Satsu's whereabouts, she is astonished that Chiyo actually believed she would tell her. A month after her arrival, Chiyo begins her training. Pumpkin is tasked with introducing her to her teachers, and the first thing that Chiyo learns is not to be the last one to school in the mornings. Chiyo quickly learns that tardiness is among the greatest of sins. The final teacher of the day says she will teach Chiyo singing for as long as she survives Hatsumomo, and then she laughs.

Discussion Question 1

What happens when Mr. Tanaka sends for Chiyo and Satsu?



Discussion Question 2

How are Chiyo and Satsu treated as soon as they are out of Mr. Tanaka's sight and who takes them?

Discussion Question 3

Who does Chiyo quickly learn is the most important person in her new life? What happens to reveal this?

Vocabulary

indifferently, anguish, astonished, retracted, adaptable, confusion, disposition, afflicted, indulgence



Chapters Five and Six

Summary

Later in the afternoon, Hatsumomo takes Chiyo to the Registry Office where she is registered officially as a geisha in training. Awajiumi opens his account book and takes down Chiyo's name and town of birth. Chiyo asks him about Satsu, but he assures Chiyo that there is no one by that name who had registered before her. When they return to the okiya, Auntie takes her to the bathhouse and helps her to bathe. Then Chiyo is given her first lesson in how to apply geisha makeup by observing Hatsumomo as she applies hers. Chiyo watches carefully. Then, she follows Hatsumomo to Mr. Bekku who is the official dresser. By the time she is finished, she is so beautiful even Auntie sighs.

Everyone is sound asleep but Chiyo later that night when a man enters asking for Yoko. Yoko monitors the telephone and books Hatsumomo's engagements. He goes back into the maids' room, and Chiyo hears her calling tea houses until she finds Hatsumomo. She tells her that Onoe Shikan is waiting for her. Hatsumomo returns home and spends time with her boyfriend, hidden in the maids' room.

One night, Hatsumomo comes home with a friend, carrying two packages. She opens the first, revealing a stunning summer kimono, and even Korin draws in a sharp breath when she sees it. Hatsumomo reveals that it belongs to Mameha – a geisha they both refer to as Miss Perfect. She had blackmailed Mameha's maid after catching her in a compromised position. Hatsumomo and Korin tell Chiyo that they will reveal the location of Satsu if Chiyo follows their instructions without question. The first is that she is to practice her writing skills on Mameha's kimono. Then, wrapping it up, they force her to deliver it back to Mameha's maid. The next morning, Mameha and her maid pay a visit to the Nitta Okiya. Hatsumomo immediately blames Chiyo, but Auntie is not stupid. Mother doesn't believe her story either, but she is happy to agree with Granny in that Chiyo must be beaten and forced to pay for the kimono. Auntie tells her the facts of life once more, and she beats her to prevent Granny from doing permanent damage to her as Granny had done to Auntie years earlier, breaking her hip. When Chiyo is allowed to leave, Hatsumomo is waiting in the hall. Chiyo asks where her sister is, and Hatsumomo happily announces that she is in a jorou-ya called Tatsuyo in the district of Miyagawa-cho, south of Gion.

Analysis

Hatsumomo takes Chiyo to the Registry Office to sign her up as a geisha in training, and Chiyo is amazed as Hatsumomo turns on the charm with the former sumo wrestler who is behind the desk. As the person who is responsible for the money in the region, it is in her best interest to ensure he has nothing but glowing thoughts of her. She is less than thrilled when he comments on Chiyo's beauty however, earning her even more of



Hatsumomo's wrath than before. When they return to the okiyo, Chiyo is allowed to watch as Hatsumomo first applies her geisha make-up. Then, Mr. Bekku helps her to dress. The entire process is punctuated with Hatsumomo's comments that no matter how well she learned, she would never be as beautiful.. When she is finally finished, Chiyo is filled with reluctant envy despite her feelings for Hatsumomo.

As the youngest geisha in training, Chiyo must stay up until Hatsumomo returns at night in case she needs help or wants food. As such, she learns what the rest of the maids already know and keep secret. Hatsumomo has a boyfriend that she sneaks into the maids' quarters after Auntie, Granny, and Mother are asleep. When he leaves, Hatsumomo makes sure that Chiyo understands how much her hatred will increase if anyone discovers her secret. One night, Hatsumomo returns home with her friend Korin. She is bearing two packages – one containing a kimono belonging to a rival geisha and the other containing a kimono she blackmails her rivals' maid to buy for her after catching her with her boyfriend. Hatsumomo insists that Chiyo put it away for her. Then, she bribes her into other actions by telling her that if she follows orders without question, she will reveal the location of her sister. The instructions prove difficult to follow, however, as Hatsumomo insists that she ink characters on her rivals' kimono and then return it to her maid. The next day Chiyo and Hatsumomo are both confronted, and again Hatsumomo lies, blaming Chiyo entirely. With no proof other than instinct to the contrary, Auntie is faced with punishing Chiyo by giving her a beating and adding the cost of the kimono to her overall debt. At least, the beating will be one she survives, she tells Chiyo, asking her what she did to incur Hatsumomo's wrath. Chiyo insists that she did nothing, but Auntie warns her to beware as things could get much worse. When she is allowed to leave, she finds Hatsumomo on the stairs and insists she live up to the bargain that cost her so heavily by telling her where her sister is. Hatsumomo seems happy to tell her the details of her sisters' new life as a prostitute, although Chiyo doesn't recognize the term or district at the time.

Discussion Question 1

What differences in Hatsumomo's behavior does Chiyo observe when she is taken to the registry office and why?

Discussion Question 2

What secret does Chiyo learn about Hatsumomo and what would happen if Mother discovered this?

Discussion Question 3

What do Hatsumomo and Korin make Chiyo do and how?

Vocabulary

reputation, confusion, modesty, pigment, astonishment, artificial, cylindrical, apprentice, ventilation



Chapters Seven and Eight

Summary

Chiyo asks Auntie what a jorou-ya is, and she is told it is where Hatsumomo will end up if there is any justice. Chiyo begins to plan how she might sneak out and get to Tatsuyo, but she is confined to the okiyo for fifty days as part of her punishment. Meanwhile, she works at making Granny and Hatsumomo pay for their cruelty by adding pigeon droppings to Hatsumomo's face cream and using her toilet rag on Granny's sleeping robe. The cook makes Chiyo pay even more by cutting back her bi-monthly rations of fish. To repay her, Chiyo scatters mouse droppings throughout the kitchen. One night the phone rings, and Yoko brings Chiyo Hatsumomo's shamisen, telling her she must take it to the Mizuki teahouse immediately. Since all of the others are asleep, Chiyo slips out, using the opportunity to find her sister. She delivers it as requested and asks the maid at the door where the Miyagawa-cho district is. When Chiyo gets there, she sees women who look similar to geishas, but who tie their obi in the front instead of the back. When she finds the right place, she is told they have no Satsu at first, but when promised money, the woman out front sends for her. Now called Yukiyo, Satsu is working as a prostitute. After hugging Chiyo, she confesses her plan to run away the following Tuesday. They agree on a place and time to meet, and Chiyo hurries back to the okiyo. She is horrified to discover that Hatsumomo and her boyfriend are already there. He hears Chiyo. Then, he leaves telling Hatsumomo that he might not come back at all as his wife is very suspicious already. She takes out her misery on Chiyo, first accusing her of wanting to run away with her sister, and then giving her a handful of money, telling her she would be doing her a favor if she did. She stuffs the money under Chiyo's sash, retying it tightly. Then, turning her around, she softly strokes the side of Chiyo's head once or twice before viciously grabbing a fistful of hair and yanking it until Chiyo cries out, shouting at her as she drags her up the stairs. She bangs on Mother's door and tells her that Chiyo stole her jewelry and sold it to some man on the street. Mother sends Hatsumomo and Auntie downstairs to see what exactly is missing. When they return, it is with news that her emerald brooch is missing. While they are gone, Chiyo swears that she did nothing of the sort and that Hatsumomo is just angry because of an incident that happened while her boyfriend was visiting her in the maids' room, and Hatsumomo was taking it out on her. The accusation is substantiated when the money in Chiyo's sash is discovered, but Hatsumomo isn't entirely off the hook either as Mother confronts her about her boyfriend. She denies it, but with Auntie holding her arms, Mother opens her kimono and using her fingers, checks for herself. The lie earns Hatsumomo a slap across the face while Chiyo is still forced to pay for the brooch.

Mother orders that all staff be denied fish for six weeks as punishment. Now, only Auntie has a key to the front door which stays around her neck. Chiyo loses her job of sitting at the door at night. The chore is given to Pumpkin instead. When anyone arrives, she has to wake Auntie. For days it seems as though Chiyo won't get an opportunity to leave, but then she has an epiphany. On the night she is supposed to meet Satsu, she waits till everyone is asleep and climbs to the roof. She climbs to another roof, but she dislodges



a tile and quickly follows it. She gradually becomes aware of two women talking over her. The maid knocks on doors finding Auntie and bringing her back. In a rage, she drags Chiyo home. Instead of giving Chiyo a light beating, she dumps a bucket of water over her and beats her in earnest, telling her she will never be a geisha. Pumpkin receives a beating from Granny for not paying attention. Chiyo's arm is broken, and the cost of her medical care is added to her ever growing debt. Mother adds that Satsu escaped, and since she hasn't been paid for yet, that cost is also added. Then, she orders her out where Hatsumomo intercepts her. She admits that she's spent days trying to decide how to ruin Chiyo's life, and she can't decide if she is pleased that Chiyo has done it to herself or not.

Chiyo soon learns how it feels to be isolated. All winter she wonders about Satsu, at first dreaming that her sister will rescue her, but then just wondering if she'll ever see her again. Spring comes and with it a package addressed to Chiyo. Auntie opens it to find an envelope and a wooden box. The box contains the mortuary tablets from her parents' home and two additional ones that Chiyo doesn't recognize. Auntie reads the letter to herself and then out loud to Chiyo. In it, Mr. Tanaka tells her about her parents' deaths and how Satsu had been there just long enough convince Mr. Sugi's son to leave with her. Neither has been seen since.

Analysis

Confined to the okiyo for fifty days as well, Chiyo resigns herself to getting even in small ways with those who takes such pleasure in abusing her. When Yoko comes to her one evening and tells her that Hatsumomo requires her shamisen immediately, Chiyo, knowing everyone else is asleep, sees her chance to leave the okiya and find her sister. She delivers the shamisen to the tea house as first requested. Then, she gets directions to the district where her sister is being kept. After some bribery, she manages to locate her sister. In the brief time they are together, they plan their escape. Chiyo goes back to her okiya as quickly as she can, hoping she hasn't been discovered. But, when she goes inside she sees that the maids' door is open. She peeks inside, and Hatsumomo sees her. Her boyfriend senses Chiyo's presence as well, but Hatsumomo assures him it is nothing. He knows she lied to him when he comes out to find Chiyo there. Angry, he threatens not to return at all, and Hatsumomo takes her vengeance out on Chiyo. First, she feigns a backhanded kind of care, telling Chiyo that she knows she went to see her sister and is planning to run away. Then, assuring Chiyo she'd be happy if she did leave, she proves it by giving her enough cash to make her escape easier. For a moment, Chiyo feels Hatsumomo caress her head. Then her fingers dig in and pull hard. She begins to yell at Chiyo, dragging her to Mother's room where the next lie is told. Claiming Chiyo stole from her, she manages to add the cost of a brooch to Chiyo's debt. This earns Chiyo another beating. The only way Chiyo can endure it is by thinking about meeting her sister in a matter of days to leave it all behind. She gets some small satisfaction from telling Mother that Hatsumomo was just angry because a tryst in the maids' room with her boyfriend hadn't gone well. That earns Hatsumomo a stinging slap to both her pride and her face.



Pumpkin cries when Mother rules that all staff be denied fish for six weeks to punish them for allowing Hatsumomo's boyfriend to enter the okiya. It all strengthens Chiyo's desire to leave. Now, she is despised by the entire staff and isolated by their wrath. Chiyo and the rest of the staff are locked in the okiya from that day forward. Try as she might, she can't think of how she will escape to meet with Satsu. Then she remembers the roof. On the day Satsu is leaving, she waits for everyone to fall asleep before making her attempt, managing to get to the roof unnoticed. From there things prove to be harder than she imagined. It is a long way down, and despite getting to a lower roof, she still falls and breaks her arm in the process. The arm is the least painful part of the affair, however, as it is hardly minutes later that Auntie is standing in front of her, more angry than Chiyo has ever seen her. Chiyo is beaten, her arm casted, and the medical bills added to her debt, as is her sister's escape since the woman who had her hadn't paid for her yet. All hopes of becoming a geisha are removed as Mother can't trust her and won't take a chance that Chiyo will embarrass her like that again. Even Hatsumomo is pleased that Chiyo has self-destructed, and she relishes telling her so. She tells Chiyo that she will be a maid like Auntie for life.

The winter passes, and spring brings a package addressed to Chiyo from Mr. Tanaka. In it, he tells her that her parents are both dead, and Satsu had passed through only briefly, leaving again with Mr. Sugi's son. Auntie speaks kindly to her for the first time, telling her to bear up as there is nothing else that can be done. Chiyo feels utterly alone.

Discussion Question 1

In what ways does Chiyo quietly punish her tormentors?

Discussion Question 2

What happens when Chiyo tries to meet Satsu?

Discussion Question 3

What punishment does Chiyo face for trying to sneak out? What are her future prospects as a result?

Vocabulary

confinement, unguent, disassembled, disarray, despondent, protruding, astonished, arduous



Chapters Nine and Ten

Summary

A year after learning of her parents' deaths, Chiyo is almost twelve and is beginning to look less like a child and more like a young woman. One night, she dreams of a bearded man. Though she didn't understand the dream, she feels it is important somehow. She remembers a moth that had landed on her in her early days at the okiya, and she retrieves it from the piece of cloth she had entombed it in beneath the house. It still looks as it did that day, but when she touches it, it turns to dust. At that moment, with new awareness that her life was forward and not back, Auntie calls her to return two hair ornaments to Hatsumomo at the school as well as completing some other errands. When she drops them off to her, Hatsumomo takes an opportunity to point out a young girl, reminding Chiyo that she will be a geisha, but Chiyo never will.

Feelings of despair have her in tears at a small stone wall by the river until a man's voice interrupts her, talking to her with a kindness that Chiyo has almost forgotten. Addressed as the Chairman by the men and geisha with him, he tells the others to go ahead of him while he stays behind to talk to Chiyo. He gives her a coin and tells her to buy herself a shaved ice with it, wrapping it in his handkerchief so that she can wipe her face off afterwards. In that moment, she realizes that she didn't want to become a geisha – she wanted to be a geisha. She does exactly as he suggests and relishes every moment of her contact with him. Then, she takes the leftover coins to a shrine and puts them in the offertory box, adding her fervent prayer that somehow she becomes a geisha one day. She tucks his handkerchief into her robe and goes back to the okiya.

Granny dies after an accident with her space heater electrocutes her. For almost two weeks afterward, the okiya is first cleaned and then prepared for the parade of mourners who follow. The doctor is summoned one evening to care for the cook when she sleeps too little and overworks herself, causing her collapse. Despite the Great Depression, Mother puts on a proper show. Chiyo's job is to take the guests' shoes to the maids' room, remembering which ones belong to whom, and return them when they are ready to leave. Mameha pays close attention to Chiyo on her way out, making her look up into her eyes, and commenting on their color.

Granny's funeral is a week later, and then Auntie moves into her room while Pumpkin occupies the room that Auntie vacates. Two maids are hired soon after. Then Pumpkin's chores are taken from her to give her more time to practice her shamisen. Nearing the end of the month after Granny's death, Mameha's maid comes to the door with a request that Chiyo arrange to be sent on an errand the following afternoon. Chiyo is led to Mameha's apartment and given tea. When Mameha enters, she asks Chiyo questions including how Pumpkin and Hatsumomo get along and how Hatsumomo treats her. She tells Chiyo a bit about their past association and explains some of her behavior. Chiyo admits her part in the kimono vandalism, and Mameha allows her to



apologize, teaching her how to bow correctly. Then Mameha asks why Mrs. Nitta stopped her geisha training. Reluctantly, Chiyo tells her almost everything. When prompted further, she admits to having tried to run away as well. Mameha suggests that Chiyo concentrate on finding the correct time to approach Mrs. Nitta by consulting her almanac, and shows her how to do so, confirming that the day she tried to run away was an inauspicious day. Then they look up various dates in the following weeks that would be auspicious, and Mameha sends her back to the okiya, instructing her to tell no one where she has been.

Analysis

Chiyo realizes after a time that for her whole life at the Nitta okiya she had been living in two worlds. In one world, she was a maid at the okiya, but in the other, she fully expected one day to go home again. This division kept her from going forward with either imagined life. Like the moth she had entombed beneath the house so many months before, the past was gone and would never be resurrected. A sign, Chiyo feels sure will be given her, and as it turns out, the entire day is symbolic in one way or another. At every turn, she is constantly reminded of the flow of time and of the current of life.

Chiyo meets with Hatsumomo at the school, and Hatsumomo once again uses the opportunity to remind Chiyo that her future is bleak. Chiyo is overwhelmed and cries in public. A man stops and shows her a scrap of kindness – something she hadn't felt in some time. He tells that too often in life we do not know the kindness we should, and he gives her a coin for shaved ice and his handkerchief. The event and moment of kindness changes her life, and she decides then and there that she wants to be a geisha. Then she will be surrounded with men of this caliber. He gives her money for a shaved ice and with the change, she begs the gods to help her find her way to that end.

Granny's fear of fire is justified, although the collection of kimonos is safe. Instead, when she touches her space heater she comes in contact with a live wire that immobilizes her and pitches her face first forward onto the heater. The smell alerts Chiyo who calls Auntie immediately. As death is the most impure thing in Shinto, the house becomes a hive of activity, cleaning and preparing.

Chiyo greets the guests and remembers which shoes they are wearing so they can be returned when they leave. Her only moment of discomfort comes when she recognizes Mameha and her maid. Mameha doesn't leave immediately. Instead, she asks Chiyo's name and tells her to look up at her, commenting on the unusual color of her eyes. Chiyo thinks of the Chairman who showed her kindness often, reminding herself of him by taking out his handkerchief and breathing in the scent of him. She prays that somehow he will help her.

When Mameha's maid returns requesting that Chiyo meet her the following afternoon, Chiyo is sure that the subject will be the kimono again, and though she dreads the confrontation, she keeps the appointment. The meeting isn't at all what Chiyo expected.



In fact, Mameha explains a great deal, asking why she is no longer training to be a geisha and telling her why Hatsumomo is so mean to her, even explaining why her attempt to escape didn't work. Chiyo finally apologizes correctly for the kimono vandalism. Then, Chiyo is sent home with instructions to keep their meeting a secret.

Discussion Question 1

What does Chiyo keep to remind herself of the Chairman and why?

Discussion Question 2

What does Mameha want to see Chiyo for, under what conditions and why?

Discussion Question 3

What does Mameha finally offer Mother where Chiyo is concerned and what are the conditions settled on?

Vocabulary

censored, entombed, offertory, immobilizes, impure, testament, insignificant, bodhisattva, disposition, cultivated, complement, versatile



Chapters Eleven and Twelve

Summary

A few weeks after Chiyo's meeting with Mameha, Mameha comes to pay a visit to Mother. Once the pleasantries are over, Mameha admits that she wants to discuss Chiyo, asking if perhaps she is ill as she hadn't seen her at the school in some time. She offers to send for a doctor. Mother calls Chiyo in to confirm Mameha is talking about the right girl. She casually admits to having considered approaching Mother regarding becoming Chiyo's older sister. Mameha and Mother haggle back and forth with Mameha commenting that Chiyo could probably have her debts paid by the time she is twenty. Mother is stunned and tries to take advantage of the situation, telling Mameha that if Chiyo paid her debts by the age of twenty, she would be willing to compensate her. Auntie sends Chiyo out to do errands, so Chiyo hears no more. Later, Mother calls Chiyo in, and while they are talking, Hatsumomo arrives. Mother asks her what she's done to annoy Mameha lately, and Hatsumomo assures her that Mameha is just trying to drive her out of Gion. She tells Mother that if Mameha wants to be a big sister to Chiyo, she should. In fact, Hatsumomo thought that this would give Pumpkin an opportunity to become an even better geisha as a younger sister to her. Mother is pleased that Pumpkin and Chiyo will be battling it out as apprentices.

The next afternoon, Chiyo is summoned to Mameha's. Mameha questions her as to what Mother had said after she left. Then Mameha warns her that if she is to act as her big sister, there would be very strict terms applied, and she begins correcting her behavior immediately. The first term she reveals is that Chiyo is to do as she is told by her without question at all times. She also warns that her position as big sister can just as quickly be removed. For now, Mameha warns Chiyo not to add to her debt in any way and to be on guard for Hatsumomo's tricks. The second term is that their conversations remain private.

Now two years older, Chiyo returns to school. She takes lessons in drums, flute, shamisen, singing, and tea ceremony as well as dance. Chiyo and Pumpkin practice shamisen together until Hatsumomo catches Pumpkin helping Chiyo with her technique in one area and puts an end to their time together. She pinches Pumpkin's lip as punctuation so hard that it begins to swell. Mameha warns her that she can no longer trust Pumpkin as she had in the past. Mameha explains the relationships between a geisha and the danna, and she gives Chiyo an idea of what is expected of her. Chiyo finds ways to remember and practice that increase her skills exponentially.

Analysis

The day finally comes when Mameha shows up to visit with Mother. Brimming with curiosity, both Chiyo and Pumpkin polish the floor outside the door in an effort to hear what is being said. Even Auntie hangs around with her ear to the door. Mameha is very



subtle in her presentation of her interest in Chiyo. She manages to haggle her way into a bet with Mother. If Chiyo were a little sister to Mameha herself, Chiyo could quite likely have her entire debt paid out by the time she is twenty. The deal that Mother makes with Mameha is that if Chiyo pays her entire debt by the time she is twenty, having paid Mameha half her usual fee until then, she would be happy to give her the remainder of what she earned, plus thirty percent. If, of course, Chiyo reaches twenty without clearing her debt, Mother would be unable to pay any fees owed. When Mameha declines, Mother agrees that thirty percent is a bit low and doubles it to sixty percent.

Auntie sends Chiyo out on errands,. When she returns she goes directly to Mother's room to inform her that she was unable to fulfill one of them. Mother tells her about Mameha's offer to take her on. As they are talking, Hatsumomo returns and learning of Mameha's offer is convinced that it is all done in order to attempt to force her out of Gion. She is quite happy to take on a challenge of making Pumpkin into a better geisha than Chiyo, and the idea of competition between the two makes Mother's day.

Chiyo expresses her gratitude the next afternoon at Mameha's, but she tells her nothing has happened as yet, and asks what Mother said. Chiyo admits Mother seemed confused by Mameha's interest, and Mameha warns her that both Mother and Hatsumomo would be pleased if she failed.

To begin, Mameha expresses the importance of Chiyo's obedience, reminding her that had she learned that lesson earlier, she would be in a much better position now. She insists that Chiyo guard herself against leaking information to Chiyo, even roll playing to coach her. Chiyo feels as though she is starting school from the beginning again. Mother doesn't release Chiyo from her chores as she had with Pumpkin, likely hoping Chiyo will fail and lose her bet. After school, she is expected to practice shamisen for at least an hour each day. Despite Hatsumomo's efforts to derail Chiyo at every turn, she practices harder than most, using her desire to meet the Chairman again to fuel her efforts to succeed in the highest manner possible. She practices her shamisen in her head as she runs errands, uses memory tricks to remember songs and uses emotion to equate with dance movements – each movement equating to a different scenario she creates in her mind relating to time spent with the Chairman.

Discussion Question 1

What are the terms that Mameha gives Chiyo as conditional on her acting as Chiyo's big sister?

Discussion Question 2

What warning does Mameha give Chiyo about trust?



Discussion Question 3

How does Chiyo remember dance moves and what fuels her desire to learn?

Vocabulary

patronage, compelled, imitation, exquisite, façade, comportment, meditation



Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen

Summary

Two years later, Pumpkin makes her debut as an apprentice geisha. Soon after, Pumpkin, dressed as an apprentice geisha for the first time, is taken to the Mizuki teahouse where she and Hatsumomo perform the ceremony that binds them as sisters. From then on, she is known as Hatsumiyo, although most people continued to refer to her as Pumpkin. Mameha is busy, and when they see each other again, almost six months have passed. To celebrate Chiyo's approach to womanhood, Mameha has Tatsumi dress her in a proper kimono of dark blue silk with carriage wheels in red and yellow. Then Mameha takes her out into the street where Chiyo begins to learn how to walk as a geisha. Spring and summer pass. Mameha continues to take Chiyo from shop to shop, ensuring that she is 'seen' by all the right people, and giving them a chance to take notice of her. Finally, she tells Chiyo that Waza-san has chosen the third day in November as a suitable day for Chiyo's debut. She also begins teaching Chiyo how to use her eyes to express herself. Then, she challenges Chiyo, telling her that she will be ready for her debut when she is able to make a man stop in his tracks just by using her eyes. Soon after, she manages to make a young delivery box stumble over a curb and drop his packages. Mameha watches from a distance and tells her she is as ready as she will ever be. They go to Waza-san to select the most auspicious dates for the events leading to her debut.

After Chiyo gets her hair done in the 'split peach' fashion of the apprentice geisha, she returns to the okiya where Auntie assures her that she should have gone to Hatsumomo's hairdresser instead. Each day, Auntie helps Chiyo dress in her complete regalia and walk up and down the hall of the okiya to gain strength and balance. Finally the day comes when Chiyo and Mameha are to bind as sisters. When she is ready, Chiyo hardly recognizes herself in the mirror. Tucking the Chairman's handkerchief in her obi for luck, Chiyo and Auntie go to Mameha's and then on to the Gion Shrine where Chiyo once prayed to become a geisha. The ceremony is held at the Ichiriki Teahouse – the best known in Japan. Afterward, with her new name, Sayuri, Chiyo follows Mameha to various teahouses, but first Mameha helps her to practice kneeling. They also practice Sayuri's tea service where Mameha teaches her the importance of revealing arm. Finally, they begin the first of about twenty stops throughout various okiya and teahouses, spending just minutes in most of them. That night Sayuri is expected to attend her first engagement as a geisha novice. The banquet at Kansai International Hotel is a formal affair, where Sayuri sees Mameha perform a dance with another geisha. From there, Mameha offers to take her to the Komoriya Teahouse. The man next to Sayuri needed to use the toilet, and since no apprentice was present, Sayuri escorted him. She is stunned when they return to find Pumpkin and Hatsumomo there.



Analysis

Pumpkin is made an apprentice geisha and performs the official ceremony with Hatsumomo that bind them as sisters soon after. Chiyo is jealous, and envious beyond words, despite how apologetic Pumpkin looks, and how nervous she obviously is. Mameha is busier than usual, and six months pass between visits with Chiyo. When they see each other again, both Mameha and Tatsumi are stunned with how much Chiyo has changed in this short time. Though just fourteen years old, Chiyo feels as though she has already lived two lives. Though two seasons have passed since Pumpkin made her debut, Chiyo tries to remain patient. She pays attention to everything that Mameha teaches her. Mameha begins taking her out in public dressed in proper kimonos. She teaches her how expressive she can be with mere gestures or glances. These lessons are not wasted on Chiyo, who soon learns to apply them with style.

On the day that she manages to make a young man stumble over a curb, Mameha pronounces her ready to be an apprentice geisha, and they begin their planning for the occasion in earnest. Getting her hair done in the split peach style for the first time is an eye opener for Chiyo, who had no idea how painful the experience would be. First, the hair is washed. Then, since many geishas suffer from dandruff, the hairdresser uses his fingernails to scrape the scalp. He is unsympathetic when she whimpers and laughs as he drags a wooden comb through to remove all knots. He combs camellia oil into it and then continues to shape her hair into the correct style using soft wax to keep it there. Finally, she goes back to the okiya where seeing herself in a mirror, she feels as though her childhood has been left behind forever.

Auntie spends a week helping her dress daily in full regalia to prepare her for the ceremony that would bind her as Mameha's younger sister. The entire outfit weighed so much that even just climbing a flight of stairs was exhausting. Wearing the makeup took getting used to also. The wax that covered the skin took away sensation as well, and it was difficult for Chiyo to resist the urge to touch her face. The only thing she added to her ensemble was the handkerchief the Chairman had given her so long ago, tucking it into her obi.

The circles of her life keep coming back around when on the day of their binding as sisters, Mameha takes her to the Gion Shrine to announce their intentions and pray for favor, much as Chiyo had prayed for a way to become a geisha after her meeting with the Chairman. The ceremony is held at the Ichiriki Teahouse – the best known in Japan. The entire setting is more elegant than anything Chiyo had ever seen before. When the formalities are done, Chiyo realizes that in some way, Chiyo had been replaced by Sayuri, and the girl with a connection to home and family is done once and for all.

Mameha continues educating Sayuri in all details from the smallest mannerisms to the messages her body and eyes send as she executes even the simplest tasks. From there, Mameha begins the laborious process of introducing Sayuri to anyone and everyone of any importance. Finally, exhausted, Sayuri can hardly wait to return to the



okiya, but Mameha isn't done yet. That night, she wants Sayuri to join her on her first engagement as a novice. Despite her exhaustion, she throws herself into the task willingly. The only damper on the entire evening is when Sayuri returns from escorting one of the men to the bathroom only to discover Pumpkin and Hatsumomo sitting there.

Discussion Question 1

What does Mameha insist Chiyo should be able to do before she can become an apprentice geisha?

Discussion Question 2

What does Mameha help Sayuri to practice before she is seen in public at a teahouse?

Discussion Question 3

How many stops do Mameha and Sayuri make and why is the time important?

Vocabulary

negotiations, luminaries, regalia, cumbersome, auspicious, provocative, ornately, prominent, vulgar, decrepit, demure



Chapters Fifteen and Sixteen

Summary

Hatsumomo is midway through a story when Chiyo enters. At first she pretends that she doesn't want to continue for fear of embarrassing the 'novice' who had entered. The men encourage her, and she agrees providing, she tells them, they don't think of this particular novice when she does. Sayuri manages to turn a phrase on Hatsumomo, and while everyone at the table appreciates it and laughs, Hatsumomo is not amused. Soon after, Mameha and Sayuri leave, with Hatsumomo and Pumpkin hot on their trail, suggesting to Mameha that the evening has been so much fun that they should do it more often. Sayuri is back at the okiya early and is surprised when Hatsumomo shows up, livid. She slaps Sayuri across the face. Later, when Sayuri tells Mameha about it, she tells Sayuri that she can't possibly have expected another outcome, but that the next time Hatsumomo shows up at a party they are at, they will simply leave before Hatsumomo can cause trouble. Mameha is stunned when Hatsumomo keeps showing up, but it soon becomes apparent that Hatsumomo has bribed the maid at more than one tea house. Mameha sends Sayuri home. While for the time being Sayuri has to stay out of local teahouses, or risk ridicule, Mameha still manages to get her out to run errands, and to attend events out of town. One day, Sayuri even gets to finally meet Baron Matsunaga who was Mameha's danna, and in meeting him, she realizes that in many ways she is still just a country girl in the presence of an aristocrat. She wonders if she'll ever come across the Chairman.

Though Mameha had predicted that Pumpkin would struggle financially, she manages to win the apprentices award. She even manages to surpass Raiha who had won the award for several months in a row. Mameha explains that Hatsumomo is likely taking Pumpkin everywhere with her. As a result, Pumpkin is billing up to four ohana every hour, which for an apprentice is unheard of, but the brief visits at each stop will also damage her reputation. In fact, Mameha predicts that no one will know who Pumpkin is in five years. Mameha has a plan, but she doesn't share it with Sayuri, insisting she can't risk it getting back to Hatsumomo. One day, not too long afterword, Mameha sends for Sayuri and instructs her to get ready, having laid out a very beautiful kimono. They get into a rickshaw and ride north to attend a sumo exhibition. They are to be the guests of the founder of Iwamura Electric in Osaka – Iwamura Ken. It is also the first time that Sayuri meets Nobu Toshikazu. In the westernized atmosphere of the Kyoto University, Mameha and Sayuri are like exotic flowers who garner attention from all who see them. As they head inside, she bows to another pair of geisha and when they whisper to each other, she takes a closer look and realizes that one of them is Hatsumomo's friend, Korin who is every bit as spiteful and mean spirited. Mameha is not concerned, so she relaxes as well. Their hosts wave them over, and Sayuri knows who Nabu is immediately. His face, once badly burned, is scarred down one entire side, and she tries to focus on the man beside him instead. When she does, at first she thinks that it is Mr. Tanaka. She tries to adopt the face she has often seen on Hatsumomo when she is smiling despite feelings that are much less pleasant, but as they draw near,



she realizes it is not him at all. In fact, the man sitting beside Nobu is the Chairman she had met so long ago – the same man who inspired her desire to become a geisha so that she might have an opportunity to see him again one day. In fact, his handkerchief still went with her everywhere.

Analysis

Hatsumomo, pretending she doesn't know Sayuri, asks her name. Then, she tells a story about a girl she calls Mayuri instead, advising the men at the table not to think of Sayuri when they listen. She tells a story involving the young novice's kimono being blown up over her hips by the wind, which accidentally exposes her to a cab driver. Then, asking Sayuri's age, she assures the group that at fourteen, she certainly wouldn't have any hair. Thinking quickly, Sayuri says she has a good deal and pats the side of her head, bringing laughter to the whole table. Hatsumomo is livid and ready for revenge. She begins stalking Mameha and Sayuri so that they are constantly forced to leave events they are attending. At first, Mameha thinks that Sayuri must have told her something or let information slip about their plans, but it soon becomes obvious that Hatsumomo has bribed many of the maids of the teahouses she frequents. As a result, the number of engagements that Sayuri attends decreases. She still attends some engagements out of town with Mameha, and one time even meets Baron Matsunaga – Mameha's danna of many years. That meeting makes her realize how different she is, and regardless of the company she manages to keep on occasion, she is still not an aristocrat like the Baron. She wonders if she will ever be comfortable in a setting with aristocrats. She hardly feels worthy of the surroundings she is in.

When Mameha tells Sayuri that Pumpkin has won the apprentices' award, Sayuri is surprised but she feels better once Mameha has explained why. Her behavior reveals that she is desperate to have Mrs. Nitta adopt Pumpkin, thereby assuring her own future in the okiya. If Pumpkin is named as the adopted daughter, Sayuri will never be free of Hatsumomo. The lack of time that Sayuri is able to spend on engagements in Gion because of Hatsumomo gives her much more time to practice her shamisen, and other arts, but she finds it hard to be patient. When on one of their outings for errands, Mameha reveals she has an idea to put an end to the problem, Sayuri is anxious to know what the plan is, but Mameha doesn't dare to reveal it. In fact, she refuses to speak about the matter at all, and simply tells Sayuri to trust her. Soon after, Sayuri is summoned by Mameha, and as soon as she arrives is told to get ready. They are going somewhere that Hatsumomo will never find them. They head out in a rickshaw and arrive at the Kyoto University campus where a sumu exhibition is being held. Mameha warns her before she goes in about one of the men they will be joining, telling Sayuri that Nobu is peculiar-looking, but that much rides on Sayuri's ability to behave with decorum. Since tickets had been sold out for weeks, she felt there was little to fear from Hatsumomo, and Nobu was the President of Iwamura Electric – an important man. As they go in, Sayuri sees Hatsumomo's friend Korin, and for a moment thinks this night will be ruined also, but Mameha seems unconcerned. She leads Sayuri in to where their hosts are sitting, and Sayuri knows instantly who they are by her description. Nobu had at one time suffered a terrible burn, and one side of his face looked like melted wax.



She tries instead to focus on the other man who at first glance she thinks is Mr. Tanaka. Ready with several stinging comments to repay him for selling her, she approaches only to find it is not him at all. It is the Chairman – the man she had so hoped to see again and who inspired her to work so hard to become a geisha with his kindness to her.

Discussion Question 1

How does Sayuri stand her ground with Hatsumomo, and how does she respond as a result?

Discussion Question 2

At the sumo exhibition, which two people is Sayuri surprised to see there at the outset and why?

Discussion Question 3

What technique does Mameha understand and adopt for her little sister?

Vocabulary

ingenious, humiliate, reproachful, aristocrats, illustrious, distinguished, indulgence



Chapter Seventeen and Eighteen

Summary

When he looks at her curiously, Sayuri can feel the blood rushing to her face as she waits to greet them. Her opportunities to speak with him are few, despite the fact that fate has her sitting between him and Nobu. Nobu spends most of the time explaining the sport to her. He is a serious man, who has little patience for the small jokes she makes, and is sure that she knows it. At one point, Sayuri looks up to where Awajiumi is sitting with Korin only to discover that Hatsumomo is sitting beside him now instead. Mameha takes Sayuri outside and explains that the Chairman and Nobu have been patrons of hers for years. Hatsumomo is so shallow that she has often spoken of Nobu calling him Mr. Lizard. Though Nobu is abrupt and somewhat sharp at times, he is intelligent and fiercely loyal to his friends. As such, there is little that Hatsumomo can do but make herself look bad. She suggests that Sayuri invest her time in making it appear as though she is fully engaged with Nobu. When they go back inside, Sayuri centers all of her efforts on Nobu, simply imagining him as the Chairman makes this task easier. During the most important match, Nobu explains a move called *hatki komi* in which the famous wrestler, Miyagiyama uses his opponent, Saiho's weight against him to defeat him. Delighted on the way home, Mameha tells Sayuri that Hatsumomo has just been unbalanced as well, and won't know it until it is too late. She refuses to elaborate except to say that it is important that Sayuri maintain Nobu's interest, and that there is another man she has in mind. Then she comments that Nobu may well be her rescuer.

Sayuri reads everything she can find about the Chairman, now that she finally knows who he is. Several weeks later, Mameha summons Sayuri again, and she is surprised to find that the kimono laid out for her, while beautiful like all the rest she had worn, is torn. Mameha assures her this is intentional. In fact, she assures her that it is central to her plan. Sayuri finishes dressing and Mameha takes her upstairs to the kitchen, reminding her that she'd promised to always do as she was told. Then she explains her plan to meet a specific doctor. The cook sharpens her knife and a cut is made on her skin. Then she and Mameha go to the hospital with Mameha coaching her the entire way. The Doctor enters. She tells him the story they've rehearsed, and after he treats the wound, he tells her he hopes to see her again. Mameha, mentioning how popular Sayuri is, suggests that they visit him at his regular teahouse, the Shirae Teahouse, and he admits he will be there two evenings from then. After they leave, she tells Sayuri that she did very well. On the way back, Mameha stops at Uchida Kosaburo's studio, an artist of some caliber. She suggests Sayuri keep her eyes pointed in a direction that he will be able to see them. He doesn't seem to pay the attention to her that Mameha would have liked until a chance scenario occurs as they are leaving, and the setting sun catches the light so that Sayuri is entranced by the glow it gives her. He watches her, inspired by her expression and the light as well.



Analysis

Sayuri's entire being calms, having found the Chairman at last. Though she knew the name Iwamura Ken, and of the famous partnership he and Nobu Toshikazu had, she had never once imagined that the man she met and knew as the Chairman was the same man. She kneels in the space between them after their introductions. She sees his empty cup and reaches to pour him more tea, but to her embarrassment, she is so wrapped up in the impression she is making that she doesn't realize the pot is empty. The sumo match begins. Sayuri notices that Nobu is also missing one arm. Sayuri tries to make a good impression on the Chairman by discussing the wrestling, but Nobu interrupts, assuring her that if she wants to know about the subject, she should ask him. Reluctantly, she turns to him, and is relieved when he comments that she is beautiful. He has a gruff attitude, and she fears that anything she may say will set him off. So, when he asks how much she knows about the sport, she replies that the only wrestler she'd ever met was Awajiumi. Nobu points to the tier where he is sitting, and Sayuri sees that it is Korin who is beside him. Nobu explains the sport to her, and when she tries to joke with him, he tells her to be serious. When she looks again an hour later, Hatsumomo is there in Korin's place, and Sayuri feels sick inside. Mameha takes her outside for a moment, and explains that while gruff and sometimes unyielding, Nobu is also fiercely loyal to his friends. The best thing she can do is endear herself to him. They return to their seats, and Sayuri spends the rest of the evening talking to him, and by the last match, he is describing techniques animatedly. When the final match is done, Mameha is thrilled. She realizes that a technique used inside will be the one she can use to finally put Hatsumomo in her place. She won't elaborate, except to say that Hatsumomo will be her own undoing and that Nobu could be Sayuri's savior. Sayuri couldn't be more disappointed, wanting if anyone, the Chairman to be her savior.

Sayuri looks up all she can on the Chairman, now that she knows who he is, and she has no trouble finding articles about him and his partner Nobu. The Chairman is quoted more than once as saying that he owed Nobu a debt that he could never repay. Sayuri asks Mameha if it is her intention that one day Nobu becomes her danna, and Mameha assures her she could do much worse. Besides, she adds, Nobu has never found a geisha that he would consider taking as a mistress. Sayuri's meeting of Nobu is only the first encounter of this kind Mameha arranges for her. Next is an 'accidental' cut that helps her to meet a doctor, and a meeting with an eccentric artist, all in an effort to make it appear as though Sayuri is being courted by the disabled and physically unusual elite. With Hatsumomo's penchant for perfection, she is unable to think of Sayuri as a source of amusement rather than a continuing threat, and her assault on Sayuri recedes somewhat, allowing her to circulate in public once more without fear.

Discussion Question 1

How does Hatsumomo feel about Nobu and what does Mameha want from Sayuri?



Discussion Question 2

What does Mameha do to Sayuri to facilitate an important meeting and with whom?

Discussion Question 3

What characteristics do the men Mameha continues to set Sayuri up with share?

Vocabulary

disfigured, procession, infatuation, innovative, ensembles, sufficient, inflicted, iridescence, rapturous



Chapters Nineteen and Twenty

Summary

Weeks pass and finally Iwamura Electric calls the Ichiriki Teahouse requesting Sayuri's company. When Hatsumomo discovers Sayuri will be seeing Nobu, she helps pick out her clothing and even Auntie is puzzled by the change as she promises to stop by to see them together. Sayuri is invited by them many times in the weeks that follow, Mameha reminding her never to stay too long. On one of these occasions, Hatsumomo does show up, and Sayuri makes a great show of her affection for Nobu. He even gives her an antique comb after which Hatsumomo, satisfied, finally leaves. Months pass with no word from Dr. Crab or Uchida however, and Mameha finally goes to check on Uchida. Learning his cat had died, she then sends Sayuri with the gift of a kitten and word comes soon after that he wants her to model for him. Staring long at her eyes, he never seems to get the color he is trying for. In late February, she meets with Dr. Crab again, who was busy opening a hospital in Osaka. It doesn't take long for Hatsumomo to figure out that Sayuri has other interests than Nobu, and she quickly sets out to ruin her options by meeting with Dr. Crab herself and ensuring his interest in Sayuri is squashed. When Sayuri and Mameha arrive afterward, he will hardly speak to them, and accuses Mameha of misleading him. After he leaves, Mameha assures Sayuri that his underlying interest in her isn't sparkling conversation.

Sayuri's view of things changes once she learns about mizuage. When Hatsumomo and Pumpkin return home, Sayuri waits until Pumpkin is sent on an errand and then follows her. She reveals that Hatsumomo had been tracking her by asking Awajumi where she had been billing from. Sayuri asks Pumpkin what was said to the Doctor and tearfully, Pumpkin tells her that Hatsumomo had inferred that Sayuri had a boyfriend and was intimate with him. The only good thing was Mother's announcement that she would adopt her, ensuring her future at least. When Mameha learns all of this, she buys some ekubo – the sign an apprentice is ready for mizuage – and has Sayuri hand the first out to Nobu. It is slightly more difficult to convince the Doctor to accept it, but they manage it.

Analysis

The month in which Sayuri meets Nobu, Dr. Crab, and Uchida Kosaburo has Sayuri feeling as though she has finally escaped her cage. Every night she relives her encounter with the Chairman, his handkerchief pressed to her cheek. As weeks pass, she sees more of the doctor, the artist and Nobu, until one day Hatsumomo interferes again, and as Sayuri arrives for a visit with the doctor, she and Pumpkin are just leaving. She had told the doctor, in confidence of course, that Sayuri had been seeing her boyfriend late at night in the maids' quarters and that Hatsumomo had been covering for her. When Mameha and Sayuri arrive, he claims to have been misled, and leaves obviously angry. Mameha suggests that Sayuri talk to Pumpkin and find out what



happened. Then Mameha explains to Sayuri what a mizuage is and why it is so important.

Sayuri will never see Dr. Crab or Nobu in the same way after Mameha tells her about mizuage. When Hatsumomo and Pumpkin return, Sayuri look for the first opportunity to talk to her, but seeing how tired she is, Sayuri offers to run her errand for her. Pumpkin sits gratefully, and dozes off while Sayuri seeks a noodle vendor. When Pumpkin reveals Hatsumomo's conversation with the doctor, she apologizes tearfully, telling Sayuri she is miserable. The only good that has come from having Hatsumomo as a sister was that Mother had announced her intention to adopt her. The knowledge makes Sayuri feel ill. Mameha acts immediately by helping Sayuri announce her readiness for mizuage. To get the Doctor to accept, Mameha tells him that Hatsumomo lied to him because Sayuri got a leading dance role instead of Pumpkin. When Hatsumomo finds out, she is not amused.

Discussion Question 1

What is a mizuage and why is it so important?

Discussion Question 2

What does Pumpkin reveal about Hatsumomo's interest in Sayuri?

Discussion Question 3

What is ekubo and what is the purpose of it?

Vocabulary

resonates, repulsive, consequence, accusations, integrity, cooperative, misfortune



Chapters Twenty-One and Twenty-Two

Summary

A party is held by the Baron, and Mameha convinces him to invite both the Doctor and Nobu. Sayuri manages to balance her attentions between the two men, but it is clear that they do not like each other. Later, they are the only two men left at the Baron's home. They view the Baron's collection of kimonos in his underground museum, and the Baron is displeased to discover that Mameha won't attend his blossom viewing party the following week in Hakone. He insists that she send Sayuri in her place. Mameha isn't pleased, but she is unable to refuse. She warns Sayuri to be wary of the Baron when she goes.

When Sayuri arrives at the Baron's summer house, she sees that most of the other girls are Tokyo geishas. He introduces her and tells her that her job is to circulate and let everyone see her. Most of the afternoon passes before she finally runs into the Chairman who shows her the antique cosmetics box he bought for the Baron. When he presents it to him, the Baron tells Sayuri he has a gift for her too, but she must wait until the others have left to receive it. She walks the Chairman to his car, and he echoes Mameha's warning to be careful around the Baron. After everyone leaves, the Baron leads her inside and after Sayuri refuses to go to his rooms with him, he brings the package out to her. Inside is an 1860's kimono of museum quality, made for the Tokugawa Yoshinobu – the last shogun's niece. He insists she go with him to try it on, and she is unable to refuse. The truth is that he only wants to see her naked. Fearful, she can hardly breathe but he promises he won't do anything to her. He is good to his word, merely caressing her, and with tears streaming, she is aware suddenly that his breathing is returning to normal. Then he leaves the room. He returns a short time later to help her finish dressing. When she gets back to the inn, Mr. Itchoda helps her to undress and asks her if the Baron did anything beyond look at her. When Sayuri says he didn't, Mr. Itchoda says it's fine, and not another word is said.

Analysis

At the Baron's party, Mameha warns Sayuri not to spend too much time with either Nobu or the Doctor for fear that one or the other would lose interest. When they are the only ones left, the Baron gives them a private viewing of his kimono collection. Then he and Mameha argue – first because she insists she won't be able to attend his blossom viewing party the following week. He is even less pleased when both Nobu and the Doctor defer as well, telling them that at least the Chairman will come as he does every year. On the way home, Mameha warns Sayuri that she must be extremely careful in Hakone as the Baron would be just as interested in her mizuage as any other man.

Mameha's dresser, Mr. Itchoda accompanies Sayuri to Hakone in eastern Japan. The train ride reminds her uncomfortably of the last train ride she'd taken with Mr. Bekku,



and she tries not to let those feelings invade. The Baron is thrilled to see her and insists that she mingle. People take pictures of her, as she looks for the Chairman surreptitiously. She'd almost given up when she bumps into him. He shows her a gift he brought for the Baron, and asks her opinion. When he gives it to him, the Baron claims to have a gift for Sayuri as well, to be given to her when his other guests are gone. When Sayuri walks the Chairman to his car, he warns her to be wary of the Baron. She buries a tremor of unease. An hour later, everyone is gone, and the Baron emerges having just bathed to admit he had forgotten her. He invites her to join him but she refuses as politely as she can. The museum quality kimono he gives her is exquisite, and he insists on her trying it on, and shaking with fear, she reluctantly follows. He helps her out of her kimono, one layer at a time, and she becomes more and more anxious with each layer. The Baron gets perverse pleasure out of her nakedness, and when his breathing returns to normal, he helps her to redress herself. Back at the inn, Mr. Itchoda can tell she had undressed and asks if the Baron was on top of her or did anything else. He seems satisfied when she assures him that nothing else happened.

Discussion Question 1

What does Mameha get excited about and what does she see as the possibilities?

Discussion Question 2

What kind of balance must Sayuri maintain, between whom, and why?

Discussion Question 3

Why does the Baron want Sayuri to wait after the party, and what happens that disturbs her deeply?

Vocabulary

laceration, sustained, demure, prominent, exquisite, nuisance, protruding



Chapters Twenty-Three and Twenty-Four

Summary

“Dances of the Old Capital” begins, and Sayuri performs flawlessly. In the final week, they emerge to find Nobu waiting for them. He gives Sayuri a ruby the size of a peach pit, and a few days later, the bidding for her mizuage begins. Mameha has to leave for three days, but she assures Sayuri she will be fine. When Sayuri returns to the okiya, Pumpkin is frantic to find Hatsumomo. Mother is waiting for Sayuri, and soon a doctor arrives to assess whether or not Sayuri is still a virgin. With that confirmed, Mother announces that her status is about to change. The following week, she will formally adopt Sayuri and as the daughter of the okiya, she would trade rooms, taking the larger one from Pumpkin and Hatsumomo. Hatsumomo returns and asks if Mother has changed her mind about adopting Pumpkin, but Mother insists she never intended to do such a thing. When Hatsumomo leaves, Sayuri asks if it would be possible for Mother to adopt both her and Pumpkin. She is told to leave the business to Mother.

Nobu, Dr. Crab and the Baron all bid for Sayuri’s mizuage, but the Doctor is willing to pay more than the others, paying the highest amount ever in Gion for her to date. The adoption occurs and Sayuri’s name changes from what once was Sakamoto Chiyo to Nitta Sayuri. Sayuri joins Dr. Crab at an inn and he tells her that this will be the second time he collects her blood. When he is finished, he thanks her, collecting her sample and adding it to his case. In the morning, he gives her a package of herbs to discourage pregnancy, telling her to use them cautiously as they are very expensive. A month later, she mentions a festival to Nobu that Mameha has arranged for her to attend in Hiroshima, and the next day, Nobu sends her a travel trunk as a gift. She plans to thank him at a large party planned months earlier, but at the last moment, a call comes to tell her that her presence is not needed.

Analysis

When Sayuri returns home, she is stunned to see that the poster advertising the upcoming Dances of the Old Capital has her as the apprentice geisha on it, and the poster is plastered all over town. Two weeks later, the show begins. Sayuri dances, changes, and watches Mameha dance from the wings while she waits for her next appearance. The dance by Mameha is exquisite and brings Sayuri to such a level of sorrow that her performance afterward is amazing. She uses this inspiration for every performance afterward. When Nobu gives Sayuri a large ruby, Mameha immediately insists that Sayuri should return to the okiya and give the ruby to Mother to help pay her debt down. Mother accepts it without grace, but with considerable surprise. A week later, the bidding for Sayuri’s mizuage begins. Her status is confirmed, and Mother announces her intention to adopt her the following week. Hatsumomo enters, and it becomes immediately obvious to her that there has been a shift in power. Learning the



truth of Pumpkin's loss of status, she is livid. Mother tells her that she'd best learn to treat Sayuri with respect.

Sayuri joins Dr. Crab at an inn where he shows her the sample he kept from when she 'hurt' her leg and he met her the first time. He has a case of forty or fifty vials, each labeled with a name. Even Mameha's sample is there as well as Korin's. Mother puts a stop to all Hatsumomo's bad behavior, and for a time, life is pleasurable for Sayuri. Sayuri never sees the Baron again and seldom runs into the Doctor either. When the call finally comes from Iwamura Electric she sits between Nobu and the Chairman. The Chairman is cordial to her, but distant. The party is not cancelled, she discovers, but Nobu had left it early. The Chairman had also attended. Sayuri learns this and is sick inside to realize that he didn't care.

Discussion Question 1

What gift does Nobu give to Sayuri, and what does Mameha insist she do with it?

Discussion Question 2

What change does Mother announce and how do Hatsumomo and Pumpkin react?

Discussion Question 3

Who is involved in the bidding for Sayuri's mizuage, and who wins? What does the winner give Sayuri the next morning and why?

Vocabulary

betrayal, sabotaging, commodity, tyranny, cultivate, adversary, laceration, privilege



Chapter Twenty-Five

Summary

In the summer of 1938 at the age of eighteen, Sayuri goes from apprentice to geisha. Then, three weeks later, Mother announces that in a month's time, she will have a danna. Hatsumomo is outside when Mother tells Sayuri that Nobu will be her danna, and she all but chokes on her glee. Mameha already knows, and she tells Sayuri she has no right to ask for more than kindness from a danna. Sayuri continues to attend parties, noticing an increase in the military presence. General Tottori, the man who oversees one of five large areas of administration, expresses interest in Sayuri. Mameha reminds Mother that someone in his position might be worthwhile being indebted to. At the same time, Nobu had expected to have Sayuri as his mistress, and though she saw him whenever he came to Gion, the most recent time he was angry and distracted. When she looked at him, he was staring at her, lost in thought.

Mameha's dresser, Mr. Itchoda, accompanies Sayuri to Hakone in eastern Japan. The train ride reminds her uncomfortably of the last train ride she'd taken with Mr. Bekku, and she tries not to let those feelings invade. The Baron is thrilled to see her and insists that she mingle. People take pictures of her, as she looks for the Chairman surreptitiously. She'd almost given up when she bumps into him. He shows her a gift he brought for the Baron and asks her opinion. When he gives it to him, the Baron claims to have a gift for Sayuri as well, to be given to her when his other guests are gone. When Sayuri walks the Chairman to his car, he warns her to be wary of the Baron. She buries a tremor of unease. An hour later, everyone is gone, and the Baron emerges having just bathed to admit he had forgotten her. He invites her to join him but she refuses as politely as she can. The museum quality kimono he gives her is exquisite, and he insists on her trying it on. Shaking with fear, she reluctantly follows. He helps her out of her kimono, one layer at a time, and she becomes more and more anxious with each layer. The Baron gets perverse pleasure out of her nakedness, and when his breathing returns to normal, he helps her to redress herself. Back at the inn, Mr. Itchoda can tell she had undressed and asks if the Baron was on top of her or did anything else. He seems satisfied when she assures him he hadn't.

Analysis

Mameha had already won her bet with Mother, but she still worked hard to ensure Sayuri's face was well known. In 1938, Sayuri becomes a full-fledged geisha, and Mother is thrilled. Now her potential to earn really begins. In only three weeks, she tells Sayuri that she is will soon have a danna, insisting that she should be thrilled. Nobu is a good man, and will be a great provider. Sayuri dies a little inside, knowing that with Nobu for a danna, her hopes of ever having that relationship with the Chairman are over. Once she is connected to Nobu, the Chairman will never touch her as she will be considered his partner. Hatsumomo is more than a little amused by the idea, making



jokes that relate to his injuries. Mother snaps back at her. She goes to see Mameha, and tries to convey her disappointment, but Mameha is of the same opinion as Mother. She suggests she throw herself into her work to deal with her disappointment.

Discussion Question 1

What is a danna, and what role does a danna play in the life of a geisha?

Discussion Question 2

How does Mameha answer the question of the warm weather that differs from how most geisha might and why is it special?

Discussion Question 3

How does Hatsumomo respond when she discovers that Sayuri is expected to have Nabu for a danna?

Vocabulary

insignificant, excursions, aristocrats, mundane, lecherous, suppressing, rebuking, prospects



Chapters Twenty-Six and Twenty-Seven

Summary

In September, Sayuri and General Tottori perform a ceremony to celebrate their alliance. Her encounters with him happen twice a week. They are gradually reduced to an unpleasantness she tolerates. Then, in the spring of 1939, Sayuri meets Yasuda Akira, and soon he is inviting her to the Tatematsu Teahouse weekly. After three months, he brings her a simple kimono. Soon after, they are alone together. It is the first time that Sayuri gives herself to a man for pleasure. It is an awakening for her that is unparalleled. Meanwhile, as her danna, the General ensures they have a regular supply of tea, sugar, medicine, and even chocolates – all of which were becoming difficult if not impossible to find in Gion. Nobu stops inviting her to parties, and her invitations to Iwamura Electric's parties cease as well. A young geisha approaches her and asks her about Nobu and how to please him. Sayuri takes it upon herself to ensure she runs into Nobu. They walk briefly together, and he admits knowing her danna's name. He is deeply disturbed by her choice. She insists she had little to do with it, but Nobu is clear. He says that she is resourceful and could have changed her destiny. He then leaves her after announcing that he didn't like to have things put in front of him that he could not have.

Mother tells Sayuri it is time to change rooms with Hatsumomo and Pumpkin. Sayuri discovers Hatsumomo reading her private journal, and while she attempts to get it back, she stumbles on the emerald brooch Hatsumomo had accused her of stealing years before. Sayuri grabs it, and while Hatsumomo is distracted, takes back her journal, too. She hides the journal in her room and takes the brooch to Mother. Hatsumomo claims she found it on Sayuri's table along with a journal. Mother follows her up to Sayuri's room, but Hatsumomo is unable to find it. She realizes the tables have turned when Mother insists she repay Sayuri for the brooch. Her bouts of cruelty and episodes of insulting behavior with clients continue. Her drinking increases and takes a toll on her looks as well. Mameha and Sayuri begin to follow her around, quietly and sadly commenting that she is losing her mind, according to doctors. When the famous Kabuki Bando Shojiro VI is in town, Mameha knows that Hatsumomo will attend his party. They attend as well, and when the famous female impersonator begins to pay attention to Mameha instead of Hatsumomo, her true colors fly. When Shojiro kisses Mameha, and then realizes Hatsumomo is jealous, he kisses her as well. But, she bites him instead and then slaps him. Mameha tries to calm her down, but Hatsumomo rages and is thrown out of the teahouse. A few days later, she is asked to leave Nitta okiya as well. Her reputation keeps her from finding anywhere else to go, and she is forced to leave Gion.



Analysis

General Tottori becomes Sayuri's danna, but unlike most dannas, he does not lavish Sayuri with gifts. He pays her bills and sees her twice weekly. He sees that Nitta okiya is always being stocked with tea, chocolate, cotton, and other finery that most have long since had to forgo. At the age of nineteen, Sayuri meets a man named Yasuda Akira who changes how she feels about men. For the first time, she finds someone other than the Chairman to occupy her thoughts. After the General becomes Sayuri's danna, Nobu drops out of her life. The Chairman still comes to Gion, but Sayuri is no longer invited to their parties. One day she is approached by another young geisha who asks her about Nobu, telling her that he is so mean to her and constantly compares her to Sayuri, and not favorably. Sayuri decides to see Nobu, and the encounter is not friendly. He tells her that he resents having beautiful things in front of him that he cannot have.

Mother tells Sayuri it is time to change rooms with Pumpkin and Hatsumomo, but Sayuri isn't thrilled to hear it as she knows it will enflame their tenuous relationship once again. Mameha simply tells her that Hatsumomo will be her own undoing. No one was to touch things put into those spaces. Of course, Hatsumomo isn't one to play by the rules. She doesn't move her things out. Instead, three days later, Sayuri finds her going through her personal journal. Hatsumomo refuses to give it back, laughing at the entries and code names that Sayuri used. Sayuri follows her back to her room, trying to think of how to distract her to retrieve it when she spies the emerald brooch she was accused of stealing years earlier. Sayuri takes advantage of Hatsumomo's drunken state, taking both the jewel and her journal. She hides the journal in her room where Hatsumomo is unable to find it. Mother insists that Hatsumomo repay Sayuri for the brooch, and she is livid. The final straw comes sometime later. Hatsumomo's drinking has increased, and her treatment of others has worsened to such a degree that she is first thrown out of a teahouse and then out of Nitta okiya. When no one else will take her in, she is left with no choice but to leave Gion.

Discussion Question 1

Who becomes Sayuri's danna and what is the value of that alliance?

Discussion Question 2

Who is the first person that Sayuri is with for the sake of pleasure alone?

Discussion Question 3

What is different about the contact she has with him that she has had with no one else?

Vocabulary

unabashed, calligraphy, sophisticated, penetrating, prominent, procurement, stimulating



Chapters Twenty-Eight and Twenty-Nine

Summary

By late 1941, many people were hoarding coupons; however, because of the General, Nitta okiya was still doing better than most. But, even that changed. At the end of 1942, a military policeman came to their door and insisted on seeing their garden, despite the fact that it is winter. General Tottori had been taken into custody that morning. Mother warns Sayuri quietly to hide their best things. Soon, Mameha became their source for tea. Finally, the worst happens and the government orders the closing of the geisha districts. All geishas were instructed to report to the registry office. Immediately. Everyone began to consider whom they knew that might be able to help. Sayuri goes to the General, but he is unable to help her. Even Mameha is beyond help, as her relationship with the Baron had ended months earlier. Sayuri hadn't spoken to Nobu in four years. She goes from teahouse to teahouse. At the Ichiriki one evening a maid tells her that her presence is requested, and she is stunned to find Nobu waiting for her. After she is chastised for her stupidity with the General, Sayuri finally begins to cry. When she begs his forgiveness, he tells her about the secure place he had set up for her, making parachutes at the kimono maker, Arashino Isamu's home. She walks him out, wondering if she will ever see him, the Chairman, Mameha, or any of the others again.

The Arashino family is good to Sayuri, sharing what little they have and keeping a roof over her head. Within twelve months of the war's end, Mr. Arashino is encouraged to begin making kimonos again. Sayuri gathers ingredients and tends vats of dye, staining her hands purple. Mother and Auntie sell goods to American soldiers from a small farm west of Kyoto, and Sayuri is stuck until they decide to return to the boarded up okiya in Gion. In November of 1946, Nobu comes to visit and wants to know why she hasn't returned. Frustrated, he gives her a large piece of the rubble from their factory in Osaka and he asks her to keep it until she can help him turn it into a jewel she can truly enjoy. He wants her back in Gion to entertain the Deputy Minister of Finance, in the hopes that she can help influence the fate of Iwamura Electric, otherwise their assets will be seized to help pay for war reparations. He insists that he hopes to see her by the end of the month, and his parting gesture is a scowl. He tells her that she looks like a peasant.

Analysis

The war drags on, and soon even Nitta okiya is affected. Despite Mother's generosity with other okiya, there are complaints when they manage to maintain a better lifestyle than others. Finally, the police appear on their doorstep as well with charges that they are hoarding. Stripped of all the valuables that they have been unable to hide, they are forced to join lines like everyone else. Some geishas are forced to work in factories. The day arrives that everyone has dreaded – the government closes the geisha districts. A gray market is in full force by then, with Mother successfully trading expensive kimonos and other precious items to raise cash to survive. Sayuri goes to the General in hopes



that he will save her from working in the factories, but he is no help. Finally, she is approached by Nobu, who reminds her that even after she takes another, lesser man as her danna, he is willing to help her. He has set up a place for her at a kimono maker where she will make parachutes for the war effort. Grateful, she thanks him profusely, after begging his forgiveness.

Beyond being dirty work, the factories were also targets and after hearing that a Raiha, a geisha she knew in Gion, had died as a result of a bomb in the factory she worked in, Sayuri is increasingly grateful for the small comforts she enjoys at the Arashino family's home. The same air raid likely killed Miyagiyama, so Sayuri is surprised to learn that Pumpkin survived the war despite several bombings. Mameha also survives, working as a nurse's assistant, but her maid Tatsumi and her dresser Mr. Itchoda both died. The Baron killed himself, having lost most of his treasures, and Mother continued to survive by facilitating sales on the gray market. When Nobu comes to visit Sayuri, he is frustrated and angry that she hasn't returned to Gion. He tells her that he needs her help to charm the Minister of Finance or Iwamura Electric will be seized by the government. She gives him one of her dancer's fans as a gift, and he doesn't appreciate it at first until she explains the significance of it and how normally a dancer would never part with such a thing. He gives her a chunk of concrete from their bombed out factory, telling her that one day perhaps it will be turned into a jewel again.

Discussion Question 1

Why didn't Sayuri's okiyo convert their decorative garden into a vegetable garden like most others did during this time?

Discussion Question 2

What does Mother tell Sayuri when she arrives, and what is Sayuri instructed to do?

Discussion Question 3

Whom does Sayuri approach for help when the Geisha district is closed and where does Sayuri go during the war? Who arranges this for her?

Vocabulary

confiscating, catastrophe, negligence, incompetence, impoverished, adversity, complexity, reparations



Chapters Thirty and Thirty-One

Summary

That night, Sayuri writes to Mother and a week later, Auntie is at the door with gifts for the Arashinos. Sayuri leaves with her the next day. When the okiya is cleaned out, Sayuri begins her rounds of Gion by calling on Mameha. A week later, once again dressed as a geisha, Sayuri entertains Nobu and Deputy Minister Sato. After the Minister drinks himself unconscious, Nobu suggest that he invite Mameha. When Sayuri sees her later than evening, she recommends that Sayuri invite Pumpkin as well. Pumpkin is less than receptive, even when Sayuri tells her she hopes that they can be friends. Finally, she tells her that they will be at the Ichiriki Teahouse the following Saturday, and hope that she will join them.

When Sayuri arrives at the teahouse, she finds the Chairman sitting by himself. Soon after Mameha and Pumpkin arrive, and a short while later, Nobu and the Minister as well. They play a game called 'Big Liar' in which everyone has to tell two stories – one true and one false – and the others have to guess which is which. If you guessed wrong, you had to drink a glass of sake. When Sayuri's turn comes, she begins to tell the story of her meeting the Chairman as a child, but changes her mind when it appears he isn't even listening. By the time it is the Chairman's turn, Pumpkin is quite drunk, and when he is finished, he and Mameha escort Pumpkin home. The Minister claims to have enjoyed the evening immensely.

Analysis

Hearing their plight, she writes to Mother immediately and a week later she is on her way back to Gion with Auntie to open the okiya. They all work to clean it up, and a week later they are ready to begin entertaining again. The Minister of Finance comes to the teahouse with Nobu, and Sayuri does her level best to entertain him, but finally resorts to a drinking game. The Minister consumes so much that he is sick out the window into the garden. After he is unconscious, Nobu suggests that Sayuri bring Mameha next time, and Mameha suggests that she invite Pumpkin. Pumpkin is less than receptive to her invitation however, treating Sayuri like a complete stranger. Sayuri is ready to give her a hug, but Pumpkin bows low and won't meet her eyes. When Sayuri invites her to join them to entertain the following week, Pumpkin insists that she must have ulterior motives. Sayuri insists her motives are merely her hopes that they can be friends, but Pumpkin doesn't believe her.

The following week when Sayuri is supposed to meet with Nobu and the Minister again, it snows heavily, but no one calls to cancel, so Sayuri goes to the teahouse. When she gets there, the place is in upheaval because a water pipe has broken, and she finds the Chairman sitting all by himself. Surprised, she joins him and he comments that she looks as beautiful as ever, although he is sure that they years have been as difficult for



her as they have been for him. Then he tells her that sometimes, all one can do is hope for the life one wishes for to survive the one they have. Sayuri has no time to answer as at that moment Mameha and Pumpkin arrive. Not long after, Nobu and the Minister also show up. They play drinking games until once again the Minister is drunk, and Pumpkin is so drunk that the Chairman and Mameha insist on seeing her home safely. After they leave, the Minister insists he has had a most enjoyable evening.

Discussion Question 1

Who convinces Sayuri to do what it takes to get back to the okiya and what is necessary in order to return?

Discussion Question 2

What game do Sayuri, Pumpkin, Mameha and the Chairman play and how does Sayuri stumble in it?

Discussion Question 3

What comment does the Chairman make that causes Sayuri to think and why?

Vocabulary

protruded, disastrous, glamorous, crass, subdued, atmosphere, enigmatic



Chapters Thirty-Two and Thirty-Three

Summary

Nobu and the Minister come as much as twice a week all winter and into spring. One day in February, Pumpkin was sick and the Chairman had yet to arrive so in a desperate attempt to entertain the Minister, Sayuri and Mameha took turns playing the shamisen and dancing. During March, Nobu only brings the Minister twice and in the first week of June, Sayuri's presence is requested at the teahouse. She is surprised that only Nobu and the Minister are there and Nobu is clearly agitated. He admits that the Minister had tried to become her danna, and approved Iwamura Electric for reopening based on the assumption it could be arranged. When it couldn't, he requested Sayuri for one night, and Nobu asks her point blank what she would have said. When she finally tells him that she would not, he sends her to get the piece of concrete he had given her so many months before. Sayuri can't think of any way to get out of returning to Nobu, not needing him to explain why he wanted it.

Sayuri waits for news that Nobu has proposed himself as her danna. When the papers announce Iwamura's change of fortune, Mother admits she has been in negotiations with Nobu. Then, Sayuri learns that her presence, along with Mameha and Pumpkin has been requested by Iwamura Electric for a weekend on the island of Amami, and they will be traveling there by plane. They finally arrive, and after settling in, bathe in the hot springs together as a group. The next day they walk around exploring, and Sayuri discovers a site that would help her to sever her ties with Nobu, although part of her wonders how she could even consider it. Later, she arranges to take the Minister for a walk and asks Pumpkin to bring Nobu, and only Nobu to the site she chose. She takes the Minister into an empty theater and seduces him easily. She tries not to think about her actions, and when the door opens, Sayuri is horrified to see Pumpkin standing with the Chairman instead, looking satisfied with herself.

Analysis

Nobu and Minister Sato spend so much time together that it is hard to believe the Minister doesn't see how much Nobu dislikes him. The presence of Mameha, Pumpkin, and the Chairman helps, and Sayuri is thrilled to see the Chairman so often. Mameha and Sayuri dance for the group one February evening in an attempt to entertain the Minister, and when Sayuri is finished, she is surprised to see the emotional impact it has on the Chairman. Afterward, he asks about Pumpkin and when he learns she won't be there, he excuses himself. Sayuri is tortured, wondering if his affections are for Pumpkin. One day in March, Sayuri is summoned to the teahouse to find the Minister and Nobu, who is in a foul mood. She tries to lighten the mood, but Nobu is eager to send the Minister home. After, Nobu admits the Minister had spoken to the proprietress about becoming her danna. In fact, the Minister had recommended Iwamura Electric be allowed to reopened based on his impression the company would pay for him to be



Sayuri's danna. In a moment of vulnerability, Nobu tells her that he has never liked geisha, but he always thought she was different. He tells the Minister asked him to arrange for Sayuri to be his for just one evening instead. When she finally tells him she wouldn't do such a thing, he has her fetch the piece of concrete, telling her it is time. She doesn't need him to elaborate further.

Sayuri makes up her mind to drive thoughts of the Chairman away, but finds it impossible. She wonders what Nobu would have done had he been the one to discover her crying by the river as a child, and fears he would have simply ignored her. Sayuri, Mameha, and Pumpkin are invited to take a trip by plane to the island of Amami for a weekend by Iwamura Electric and at first Sayuri is terrified, but once airborne for a while, she comes to see the beauty of the view from the air. Nobu is feeling very positive about the future, and Sayuri is most unhappy until she realizes suddenly that there is a way she could change her future. Hardly daring to think it, she begins to plan a seduction of the Minister that Nobu could stumble upon and cut his ties with her, but part of her is reluctant to hurt the man who has been her friend for so many years. In the end, she feels she has no other choice, and arranges for Pumpkin to bring Nobu to the site she has chosen. When the moment arrives, however, Pumpkin brings the Chairman instead to Sayuri's horror.

Discussion Question 1

Why is Nobu so agitated when Sayuri is summoned to see him and the Minister at the teahouse?

Discussion Question 2

What does Nobu send Sayuri to get and what is the implication of this?

Discussion Question 3

Where is Sayuri invited to go and what plan does Sayuri decide on?

Vocabulary

enchanted, disoriented, refinement, inevitable, immeasurably, yearning, seducing, immersed



Chapters Thirty-Four and Thirty-Five

Summary

Sayuri later learns that she'd gone to the proprietor of the inn and requested a quiet place to rest. Seeing her condition, he'd gone to Mameha shortly after. Mameha leaves her there, and Pumpkin steps in front of her. She is just like Hatsumomo in that moment, enjoying the mess that Sayuri's life is in, and happy to have played a part in it. The rest of the evening is a blur. Three days after their return from Amami, a call comes in requesting Sayuri's presence at the teahouse. She goes, knowing that Nobu would be there to finalize his claim as her danna. After some time waiting, she puts her head on her arms and drifts off, surprised when it is the Chairman who wakes her. She apologizes for falling asleep. The mistress pours sake, and the Chairman tells her Nobu won't be coming. He shows her a scroll he brought with him, pointing out the young woman who looks like Sayuri, and then she leaves. Sayuri is almost sick inside and has no idea how to face him, but he stops her before she can begin apologizing for her behavior on Amami. He begins to tell her about the day they met by the stream, and she takes out the handkerchief she'd kept all those years. Then he confesses that it was he who orchestrated Mameha as her older sister. Then, he explains that it was his debt to Nobu that kept him from telling her how he felt years ago. He asks her why she was with the Minister, and ashamed, she tells him the truth. When the truth is out, he kisses her. It is the first time she has ever been kissed. Even as her tears begin, he gathers her in his arms.

Forty years have passed since that night. Life had become soft and pleasant when the Chairman became her danna. By accepting him as her danna, she banishes herself from Gion, and Nobu from her life forever. The Chairman wanted to keep her from Nobu's sight, so instead he offers Mother a considerable stipend each month in order that she may end her career. Sayuri continues to live in the okiya, but doesn't entertain, or go to the school, but she does still see Mameha often. A year later, the Chairman buys a home where he and Sayuri can meet and they spend a great deal of time there. In 1952, Sayuri goes with him to the United States. When she suggests that they move to New York City where she can open a small teahouse and resume entertaining, knowing that he will spend a great deal of time in the states for business anyway, it becomes the perfect solution. A permanent move of that nature would also remove any reason that the Chairman could not adopt his illegitimate son, Nishioka Minoru. After his death, Sayuri remains in New York, and reflects on the life she led after leaving her tipsy house so long ago.

Analysis

Sayuri is numb. She replays the shock on the Chairman's face again and again, her emotions in chaos. The next thing she remembers is Mameha's face over hers, back in their room in the inn. Pumpkin relishes the impact she's had on Sayuri's plans. Though



she doesn't understand her motives entirely, she knows that Sayuri likes the Chairman and that bringing him to see Sayuri with the Minister ruined Sayuri's plans. When confronted about it, she claims it is payback for taking her place as the daughter of the okiya. This time, she won't be taken advantage of, she tells Sayuri. When they return, Sayuri tries to throw herself into work, but for her, it is as though something has died. All hope of everything she'd strived for is dead, and she is overwhelmed with sadness. When the call comes from the teahouse on behalf of Iwamura Electric, Sayuri thinks that Nobu is finally ready to propose himself as her danna. She takes special care with her appearance, determined not to reveal her feelings and ruin the night for him. She arrives before him and falls asleep waiting. The hand that wakes her is the Chairman's, and she is at once overcome with guilt and shame. He tells her two stories, and then reminds her of the day they met. Sayuri is stunned that he remembers. He assures her he hasn't come for an apology, but that he would like to know why she was with the Minister, asking if she felt she owed it to him for his assessment of the company. Then, he tells her that Pumpkin told him she was supposed to show up with Nobu instead, and he wonders if it was because she was trying to sever his ties with her. She can't even look at him. He pulls her to him and for the first time in her life, he kisses her – something no man had ever done. Sayuri can hardly believe the way she feels as he pulls her into his arms.

Life is almost perfect afterward. Of course, by taking the Chairman as her danna, she could no longer be a geisha, nor did she want to be. The Chairman paid Mother a handsome sum monthly so that she could remain there, and they could spend as much time as possible together. This improved even more when he bought a house for entertaining, although they spent more time there than business associates did. When the Chairman discusses opening a branch of his business in New York, he takes Sayuri there to see it for herself. On the way, he takes her to Hawaii, buying her the first bathing suit she had ever worn. Though his first wife had only given him two daughters, the Chairman had always wanted a son. The opportunity presents itself when Sayuri suggests a permanent move for her and their son to New York. Telling him they would never return to Japan, it would afford him the opportunity to adopt his illegitimate son, and have him look after the business in the states for him. It also gives Sayuri the chance to open a teahouse and entertain. They live a happy life together until the Chairman's death, and she sees things with a much more philosophical eye these days.

Discussion Question 1

What does Pumpkin tell Sayuri about the treachery she commits against her?

Discussion Question 2

What does the Chairman want to know the next time he meets with Sayuri?



Discussion Question 3

What does the Chairman do that no man has ever done with her before and how does Sayuri's life change as a result?

Vocabulary

torment, atmosphere, tutelage, exhilarated, desolate, banishing, coveted, benevolence, provocation



Characters

Chiyo Minoru (aka Sayuri)

She is a Tokyo geisha who began life with her sister, mother and father in Yoroido. Like her mother, she has gray eyes that are translucent in color. She has been described as beautiful by many over the years. She has her father's angular jaw and a pouty style of mouth she gets from her mother. Her eyes of gray have thick lashes which give her a look as though she is always startled. When she turned seven, her mother became quite ill, and Sakamoto lost all hope of having another son to go fishing with him.

Chiyo and her sister Satsu are given to a prominent business man in their small fishing village before their mother dies, with the idea that they are going to a better life. It is reasonable to assume that their parents had no idea what the future had in store for them. Instead of the adoption they expected to occur, they are sold to different houses in Tokyo. Chiyo is sold to the Nitta okiya – a geisha home in Gion. She sees her sister only once more, finding her months later, and plans to run away with her. Her plans go awry when during her escape; she falls from a rooftop and breaks her arm. As punishment for the attempt, she is restricted to the okiya and her schooling to become a geisha is stopped. When she realizes the depth of her mistake, she is sitting by a stream, and the tears are streaming down her face when a well-dressed man stops to talk to her. She doesn't know it at the time, but this is her first encounter with the Chairman, who inspires her to do whatever is necessary to re-establish her training and become a geisha in the secret hopes that she will be worthy of his company again. Though she is unaware of his involvement, the Chairman engages another well-known geisha, Mameha, to take Chiyo under her wing as her little sister. After some wrangling with 'Mother' at the Nitta okiya, Mameha manages to secure Chiyo's future as a geisha in training, and Sayuri is created.

Chiyo's geisha name, Sayuri, is created from 'sa', meaning 'together', 'yu', the sign of the Zodiac for Hen and 'ri', meaning 'understanding'. Although normally a younger sister would take on a variation of her older sister's name such as Pumpkin had done, the fortune-teller had decided that the combinations that involved elements from Mameha's name were inauspicious and should be avoided. Since geishas are generally quite superstitious, and make many of their decisions based on the Almanac readings for each day, Mameha works to create a new name.

Sayuri works hard to become a geisha, doing everything that Mameha asks of her without question or complaint. Despite early difficulties related to another geisha named Hatsumomo who feared Sayuri would eclipse her, Mameha manages to introduce Sayuri to enough men of importance that her future seems secure. Despite hardships endured by the entire Gion district, including war and occupation by soldiers, Sayuri manages to survive largely due to the help of one of these men, Nobu. By sheer quirk of fate, Nobu is the Chairman's partner in business, and though he is normally not fond of geisha in general, he develops feelings for Sayuri and sees her as often as he can.



Their relationship has its trials as well, beginning when Sayuri is auctioned off to another man (a General in the army) and arrangements are secured for him to be her 'danna.' As such, he provides for her financially, and ensures her and those in her house are kept in comfort. When war begins and he deserts her, Nobu steps in, finding a place for her at a kimono maker's home outside of Gion. After the war is over, Nobu comes to her and asks for her help to entertain the Minister of Finance who will decide the future of their company. She does as he asks, and their friendship continues until he proposes himself as her 'danna.' Knowing that if that happens, she will lose all hope of a relationship with the Chairman, she orchestrates a tryst with the General, trusting another geisha to stumble upon them with Nobu. Instead, the jealous geisha brings the Chairman. Devastated, she believes her hopes are lost, but fate has other plans. When a call comes requesting her company, she is stunned to find the Chairman waiting for her. He confesses his part in her life, and his feelings for her that go back as far as hers for him do, admitting that the only thing that stopped him from being with her was his partner's interest in her. Unwilling to stop on his toes, the Chairman backs off until the incident with the Minister brings Sayuri's feelings to his attention. Thus begins the last segment of Sayuri's life in which she retires from the world of the geisha to be a kept woman in which she and the Chairman live out their lives, have a son together, and move to the United States.

Iwamura Ken

The Chairman was born in 1980, making him just over 40 when Sayuri first met him. He had gone to work as a young man of 17 years old at an electric company in Osaka. In no time, he was supervising a crew. During his time off, he designed a fixture that would double the amount of light bulbs a single fixture could hold without altering the socket. The director of the small firm he worked at wouldn't back him, or build it, so at the age of 22, he left the company, shortly after getting married, to start a company of his own. In 1914, his new company wins a contract from the military base in Osaka to do the wiring for their new building. Nobu is given the job of overseeing this project for the military, and the two men became fast friends. His employment with the Iwamura Electric Company began shortly afterward.

The Chairman of the Iwamura Electric Company in Osaka, Iwamura is the man who comforts Chiyo when he discovers her crying on a stone. To Sayuri, he is incredibly handsome, even years later. She enjoys every moment that she can watch him, noting how his eyelashes are dense and soft like small brushes, and how expressive his mouth could be, twitching with amusement even when he tried not to show it. When he frowned, deep creases formed on both sides of his mouth, all the way to his chin. He habitually turns a sake cup around in his hands when he is deep in contemplation, revealing how serious he was feeling.



Mr. Tanaka Ichiro (aka Morihashi Ichiru)

Tanaka's family owns the Japan Coastal Seafood company. He wears a man's kimono, defining him as a man of some wealth and position, along with kimono trousers. He has skin that is tight and smooth, and his cheekbones are shiny. He is the one who examines Chiyo after she falls in the mud on the road, giving herself a blue swollen lip that resembles an eggplant. He has gray hair and carries an air of elegance. Tanaka lives in the town of Senzuru. He has one young daughter named Kuniko who is about Chiyo's age. Tanaka learns of Chiyo's mother's illness and orchestrates the adoption of Chiyo and her sister, Satsu. Once the girls are in his possession, he sells them to two separate houses in Gion where Chiyo eventually becomes a geisha, and Satsu is sold into prostitution until she escapes and never returns. Tanaka only contacts Chiyo once more with a letter that tells her of her mother's and fathers' deaths, assuring her that they were properly looked after and prayed over. In Chiyo's own description, he is the best and worst thing that ever happens to her.

Mameha

A geisha whom Hatsumomo and her friend Korin refer to as Miss Perfect, she is the victim of Hatsumomo's wrath when she manipulates Chiyo into writing on one of her most beautiful kimonos with ink. Mameha discovers that Hatsumomo is behind the vandalism, and Chiyo is forced to bear the cost of replacement. Mameha is an exotic beauty and a very well-known geisha. After her kimono is vandalized, she replaces her maid with a young girl named Tatsumi. Mameha has known Hatsumomo since they were both children. Mameha was six, and Hatsumomo was nine. Mameha is asked by the Chairman to become Chiyo's big sister and help her to become a geisha. She does so, having enjoyed the company of the Iwamaru Electric Company and its patronage for many years. She never reveals Chiyo's benefactor, or his interest in her. She does however manage to take Chiyo from an unknown child to a full-fledged geisha named Sayuri, helping her to secure her adoption into the Nitta okiya by Mother and introducing her to some of the most important and influential people she knows.

Nobu Toshikazu

Nobu is the right hand man of Iwamura Ken – the Chairman of the company Iwamura Electric in Osaka. Nobu is described as being somewhat peculiar looking because of the terrible burns he suffered when injured in a bombing outside of Seoul in 1910. At that time, he'd also lost one arm. The story is one that all of Japan is familiar with, and the combination of his terrible injuries and his tremendous success with the Chairman as President of Iwamura Electric ensured that they were often spoken of in the media. Nobu had accompanied his commanding officer to a village near Seoul. On the way back, he had been caught by an incoming shell. The officer, too slow to make it to the safety of the ditch in time was saved when Nobu laid himself over the man. Not understanding, the man raised his head as the shell struck and was killed. Nobu



survived, but his injuries were extensive. The wound is long healed, but Sayuri had often heard other geisha describing him in much less than flattering terms.

Hatsumomo

She is a well-known geisha in Gion, Hatsumomo is as petite as she is nasty. She walks with tiny steps that make her seem to glide, and her kimono barely flutters so that she appears to float. Hatsumomo is a slob, leaving everything behind her and expecting maids to clean up after her. Her room is the okiya's largest, but it's only because at one time there had been three or four geishas in the room together. She frequently lies to cover up her own bad behavior or to justify her abuse of the maids or geishas in training. Hatsumomo is described as a cat by those who know her. She is content as long as she is the only one.

Pumpkin (aka Hatsumiyo)

Pumpkin is a girl about the same age as Chiyo, and she is the only one of the nine in the house who is close to Chiyo's age. She has a plump face balanced on top of a narrow body, and she gets her nickname from Chiyo. The name reflects her habit of sticking her tongue out of her mouth whenever she concentrates on a task at hand. Pumpkin is a slow learner, and her struggle to become a geisha is reflected in how long it takes her to learn the arts involved.

Granny

Granny is shriveled and old. She has gray hair through which her scalp can be seen, and patches of her skin are brown with age. Granny has a terrible fear of fire. Her fear is well founded. Granny dies as a result of an electrical fire that occurred when she made contact with a live wire in her electric space heater. The short pitches her forward, face first into the heater which continues to burn her.

Kayoko Nitta (aka Mother)

Mother is a woman who, though much younger than Auntie, is not at all related to her. In fact, they were both adopted at the same time by Granny, but not born into the same family. Mother smokes a pipe. Her eyes are a yellow color rimmed with a cloudy color, and the skin around them sags. The rims of her eyelids are red, and her tongue and gums are gray in color. Her lower teeth appear to be set in bloody gums as a result of a poor diet when she was younger and her laugh could easily be confused for a cough instead. Her fingers are short and stubby, and her body is on the plump side, set upon by a fat neck.



Sakamoto Minoru – Father

Minoru, Sakamoto is married for the second time. His first wife, Natsu, six year old son Jinichiro, and three year old son Masao all died before he remarried and had his two daughters, Chiyo and Satsu. He is a fisherman who married a woman who claimed she had too much water in her personality. As he could be described as having a great deal of wood in his, they were seen to be a good match. He spent most of his time at sea, feeling more comfortable there than anywhere else, and as a result, he constantly smelled of the sea, whether he had just bathed or not. He works slowly and deliberately, his features heavily creased with age and worry. His daughter Chiyo sees him as a very old man with a spine that is little more than a 'path of knobs,' a head that resembles bruised fruit, and stick like arms with skin that looks like old leather.

Deputy Minister of Finance Sato Noritaka

The Deputy Minister is a distinctive looking man who has a lower jaw that protrudes quite far. He holds his head tucked against his breastbone and talks very little. He is an irritating and foul man who is difficult to entertain.

Dr. Crab

A methodical and orderly sort of man, the doctor has a posture that includes walking with elbows sticking out, leading with one shoulder. His shoulders are hunched as well and the entire package reminds Sayuri of a crab, earning him this nickname. He has a moustache and wears glasses both for distance and close up, exchanging one for the other as necessary. He is a quiet man who gives away little of how he feels.

Uchida Kosaburo

A marvelous artist, Uchida is another contact that Mameha puts Sayuri in sight of, hoping that her unusual eyes will attract his attention. His studio is in a constant state of disarray, as is the man himself. He is a strange looking man with a giant mole on one side of his mouth (which he has a habit of chewing on) and extremely bushy eyebrows. His hair is gray and his appearance dishevelled. Uchida is the kind of man who can have a temper when things go wrong, but once he explodes, his temperament settles.

Yasuda Akira

Sayuri meets Yasuda Akira when she is nineteen years old. Younger than most of the men who frequented the teahouses, he is no older than thirty. He has an air of dignity, much like what attracted her to the Chairman originally. Yasuda is graceful and sensuous. He had recently acquired fame for the design of a bicycle light he'd created.



He buys Sayuri a kimono, and though the quality is not grand or sophisticated, Sayuri is moved by the gesture. When Mother sees it, she sneers and sells it the next day.

Bando Shojiro VI

Shojiro is a famous Kabuki actor who is known as an onna-gata, meaning simply that he plays women's roles. A friend of Hatsumomo's, he had been quoted as saying she was the most lovely woman he had ever seen, and as such, on stage he often made a point of imitating her gestures in order to present a more alluring image. Whenever he came to town, Hatsumomo made a point of going to see him. It is during one such visit that Hatsumomo loses her composure when Shojiro pays more attention to Mameha than to her. An incredible mimic, Shojiro is able to move in many ways. He is slender and elegant, with fingers that move with deliberate grace. His effeminate gestures are so realistic that his mimicry could fool anyone. At parties, he enjoys imitating his guests, often to the point of their embarrassment and beyond.

Awajiumi

Formerly a sumo wrestler, Awajiumi now works at the Registry Office where his job is to ensure that all of the cash flowed through Gion. He is an elegantly dressed man, although still as large as a hippopotamus. It is to every geisha's advantage to make sure he stays happy. As such, he has a reputation for being out of his clothes as often as in them.

Teacher Mezumi

Nicknamed Teacher Mouse by her students because her surname is so close to the word 'nezumi' meaning mouse, she is the first teacher that Chiyo meets, and she is responsible for teaching them how to play the shamisen. She is the first teacher of the day, and she punishes the last student to arrive by berating and ignoring them.

Satsu Minoru

Satsu is Chiyo's sister, older by six years. She takes after their father in every way, just as Chiyo takes after their mother. She has a way of doing things that make their accomplishment seem as though they were a complete accident, despite her deliberate intent. When Satsu and Chiyo are separated from each other, Satsu is taken to a jorouya named Tatsuyo where her virginity is sold to the highest bidder. Treated badly and used without conscience, Satsu plans her escape. When Chiyo finally finds her, she barely has time to tell her of her plans to leave just days later, and they arrange to meet if possible. Satsu manages to escape her captors, and she returns to her fishing village of Yoroido where she seeks out the son of the man who manages the Japan Coastal Seafood Company for Mr. Tanaka. She convinces him to run away with her. Neither are heard from again.



Mr. Bekku

Mr. Bekku is a narrow man with black hair. He wears a stiff kimono, and just the sight of him is frightening to Chiyo. Mr. Bekku is a dresser, and his principal job is to tie the obi after helping a geisha don her kimono.

Dr. Miura

Dr. Miura is the village doctor who came to Yoroida once a week and made a point of coming up to the house to check on Chiyo's mother after she became ill each time he was in town. He studied to be a doctor in Tokyo, and it was said that he knew more Chinese characters than anyone else in town.

Kuniko

Tanaka's daughter, Kuniko is friendly and outgoing. She has a playhouse in the woods made of branches. She uses rocks and pine cones as room dividers. She has a doll made out of a canvas bag stuffed with dirt which she calls Taro. The doll likes strangers, but like her Kuniko, it has a fear of earthworms.

Koichi (aka Ono Shikan)

Given the code name Ono Shikan, Hatsumomo's boyfriend visits often, and they keep their visits from Granny, Mother, and Auntie. He has a closely trimmed beard and wears his hair oiled back, giving him the appearance of an intellectual. He wears a loose workman's jacket and peasant trousers. Koichi is already married, and he warns Hatsumomo that it is only a matter of time before he no longer returns to her. When their relationship is discovered by Mother, it is over. Hatsumomo is appropriately punished for giving herself to a man when no payment is exchanged for the okiya.

Korin

Hatsumomo's friend Korin is as means spirited as Hatsumomo. She is a co-conspirator in crime when a kimono of Mameha's is stolen and ruined. Together, they coerce Chiyo into inking the kimono before forcing her to return it to Mameha's maid.

Teacher 'Rump'

Teacher 'Rump' is an instructor of dance. She has been given her nickname by Chiyo because of the way that her skin gathers at her throat. She is about fifty years of age and dislikes Hatsumomo. When Hatsumomo asks her 'as a special favor' to pay particular attention to Chiyo, she knowingly marks Chiyo for abuse. This abuse



continues until the truth is revealed, and then she takes special care to actually encourage and help Chiyo with her dance instruction.

Older Sister

An older sister is any geisha who is willing to train another geisha and who has, at least, a one day seniority over her. They are bound together in a ceremony similar to a wedding,. Afterward will treat each other like family. An older sister becomes the most important person to a young geisha, taking her around and introducing her to the teahouses, wigmakers, chefs, etc. At night, the older sister takes her young geisha out to entertain. She bears the responsibility when her young charge misbehaves. For her efforts, she receives a portion of all fees earned.

Baron Matsunaga Tsuneyoshi

The Baron is Mameha's danna. His family controls one of the large banks in Japan, and he has a second mistress in Tokyo. He is a small, round man with a heavy look around his eyes. His face has long soft hairs that look more like garnish than a beard.

Miyagiyama

On of the greatest sumo wrestlers of the time, he is a 'yokozuna' which is one of the highest ranks given in the sport.

Arishino

A designer of kimonos, renowned for his talents.

Sugi

Sugi, Mr. Tanaka's assistant, is sent to find the doctor after Chiyo falls in the road.

Matsudaira Koichi

A famous calligrapher who gave Mameha a beautiful scroll that hangs in an alcove in her apartment.

Yoshida Sakuhei

The great master of a style of ceramics known as setoguro who after World War II became a Living National Treasure.

Hatsuoki

An attractive, young girl who was trained by the same geisha, Tomihatsu, as Hatsumomo. As such, they were known as 'sisters'. When they both became apprentices, Hatsumomo began spreading lies about Hatsuoki, damaging her reputation to such a degree that she was forced to leave Gion.

Waza-san

The name of the fortune teller that Mameha uses to ensure that she makes no decisions without being sure the outcome would be favorable.



Symbols and Symbolism

Kyoto Geisha

Chiyo becomes a Kyoto geisha, taking the name of Sayuri, after she is taken from the small fishing village of Yoroida. A geisha is a woman who devotes herself to entertaining men, living in an okiyo, and learning the art of creating illusions for the pleasure of the men they are amusing. They can dance, play instruments, tell stories, and make their clients feel as though they are kings among men.

Noh Smile

The kind of smile that uses or resembles a Noh mask with frozen features that allow men to interpret the look any way they want . They are used to hide feelings.

China Clay

A lead based makeup used by a geisha which permeated the skin, especially when not completely removed before entering the hot springs frequented by geisha. The combination dyed the skin a sickly yellow color.

Shamisen

Though called a Japanese guitar by some, it is actually much smaller. It has a thin wood neck with three tuning pegs at one end called a plectrum. The body is simple wooden box that has cat skin stretched over its top. It can be taken apart and put into a bag or a box to make transport easier.

Pigment Sticks

Used by geisha for shading color on their faces.

Paulownia Wood

Used by a geisha to draw her eyebrows, it is lit with a match and then blown out to be used as a charcoal.

Koshimaki

The name given to the silk slip or 'hip wrap' that is worn by geisha under their kimonos.



Tabi

The name of the white socks worn by geisha.

Obi

This is the cloth that is wrapped around the waist of a geisha. It is twice as long as a man is tall, and it is almost as wide as a woman's shoulders. It is wrapped around the waist and with the use of half a dozen cords and clasps; it is carefully shaped into a knot at the back.

Cocoons

The name given to the most junior of geishas in an okiya.

Amakuchi

A special kind of sake that is brewed only in winter. It is lighter and sweeter than regular sake.

Umeboshi ochazuke

A favorite snack of Hatsumomo's made with pickled sour plums and leftover rice soaked in hot tea.

Ro Underrobes

The underrobes of lightweight silk designed for use in warm weather.

Hitoe Underrobes

The underrobes without a lining that are used in September.

Tsutsumi

A small drum often played in a kneeling position and held on the shoulder where it is played with the hand.

Okawa

Medium sized drum played by resting on a thigh.



Taiko

Largest size of drum which sits on its edge and is played with fat drumsticks.

Fue

A Japanese flute.

Uchikomi

The art of swinging a drumstick used with a taiko across the body backhanded to connect with the drum.

Sarashi

The method of striking the taiko by swinging one arm up while the opposite arm strikes the drum.

Geisha

Translated, a geisha is an artist or artisan, coming from the root of the word 'gei' meaning arts. Over all else, a geisha is a performer and an entertainer. They are often so well looked after by maids that they can hardly look after themselves.

Matcha

A tea made from ground tea leaves that are whisked into boiled water until it is a frothy mix. It has a bitter flavor most find unpleasant.

Tea Ceremony

The art of preparing tea in traditional manner.

Danna

The name given to a man who is a benefactor to a geisha. He is usually married to others.

Kabuki

Another form of dance and acting practiced by a geisha in the Pontocho district.



Noh

An ancient art that is patronized by the Imperial court and is considered superior. The geishas of Gion practice this style in the Inoue School of dance.

Momoware

The name given to the 'split peach' hairstyle worn by all apprentice geisha.

Okobo

Tall, wooden shoes worn by a geisha.

Darari-obi

The dangling obi that is worn by an apprentice geisha which is knotted almost as high as the shoulders and with ends that dangle almost to the ground. Always brighter than the kimono, a darari-obi is made of heavy brocade. It is long enough to stretch from one end of the room to the other.

Furi

The name given to the dangling sleeves of a kimono.

Kuroyaki

A 'char-black' type of perfume made by grinding charred wood into soft gray dust. This perfume has been worn by geishas for generations.

Chi-yo No Tomo

A dance that translates to 'Friends Everlasting.'

Obana

A one hour stick of incense, also called a flower, that is used to mark the fees to be paid to any given geisha. Lit when she arrives, the number of obanas lit determines the charge, based on a rate that is fixed by the Gion Registry Office.



Hataki Komi

A move used by sumo wrestlers in which they use their opponent's weight against them.

Ekubo

The sweet-rice cakes that are handed out to announce an apprentice's readiness for mizuage.

Dances of the Old Capital

A yearly production showcasing the best and brightest of the geishas and their talents.

Gray Market

Similar to the black market where items like fuel oil, metals, and food are found, the gray market consists mainly of housewives who sell off whatever they have of value for cash to survive.



Settings

Yoroida

Yoroida is a small fishing village on the Sea of Japan, so small that it has only one road. It is the town where Chiyo was born.

Japan Coastal Seafood Company

The most prominent business in Yoroida, run by Mr. Tanaka Ichiro.

Tipsy House

What Chiyo calls their home in Yoroida because it leans to the side, as though drunk. The house sits on the cliff.

Amida

The Buddha of the Western Paradise.

Okada House

The place in the village of Yoroida that sells dried goods. It is where Chiyo heads to buy incense.

Senzuru

The town that Tanaka lives in, Senzuru is a dirty town, larger than Yoroido. It smells of rotted fish. The town is situated around an inlet where train tracks scar the landscape.

Kyoto

Where Satsu and Chiyo are taken after Mr. Tanaka takes them from Yoroida.

Gion

The name of the district that Satsu and Chiyo are taken to.



Okiya

The name given to the place where geishas live.

Nitta Okiya

The particular okiya that Chiyo is taken to by Mr. Bekku. It is named for the family name of Mother, Granny, and Auntie.

Miyagawa-cho

The district that Hatsumomo tells Chiyo her sister Satsu is in south of Gion.

Jorou-ya

The name of the place that Satsu is being kept in.

Tatsuyo

The name of the jorou-ya that Satsu is living in.

Mizuki Teahouse

Where Chiyo is asked to deliver Hatsumomo's shamisen.

Minamiza Theater

Chiyo passes this point, and she is told she will be in Miyagawa-cho.

Shirakawa Stream

The stream that runs under the bridge where Chiyo is asked to meet Mameha's maid a month after Granny's death.

Inoue School

The school of dance in Gion where geishas learn to dance and practice the Noh method.



Gion Shrine

The shrine that Chiyo goes to after the Chairman gives her a coin for shaved ice. It is where Chiyo and Mameha go to pray for guidance and acceptance of their plan to be bound in a ceremony as sisters.

Iwamura Electric

The company in Osaka that both the Chairman and Founder Iwamura Ken and President Nobu Toshikazu run together. It is also the same company that made the electric heater that killed Granny.



Themes and Motifs

Geishas And Their Dannas

The term 'danna' usually means husband, but to a geisha, a danna is seldom used that way. A danna is more like a benefactor with benefits. Geishas of any standing never give themselves to a man without careful consideration and compensation. If the correct sort of man is interested in becoming a danna to a particular geisha and is willing to negotiate terms, most geishas are happy to enter into such an arrangement. A geisha without a danna will be unlikely to earn enough money on her own to move out of an okiya and enjoy her independence like Mameha had. Most geishas hope that eventually a man of standing will approach the mistress of the teahouse to inquire as to what terms can be arranged, and should they be unwilling to begin with a gift of an expensive kimono, they are likely not financially ready to be a danna. When a negotiation is completed, a ceremony is performed that in many ways resembles the ceremony performed when geisha become sisters. This bond can last as little as six months, or for many years depending on the man. The arrangements made will likely include such expenses to the danna like the geisha's cost of makeup, her medical expenses, a portion of her lesson fees, and even any debt she has incurred to this point. A top geisha can expect even more. In her case, a danna will also provide spending money, buy her expensive jewelry and kimonos, and sponsor dance recitals for her. This, of course, is all on top of the usual fees which are of course still paid and are usually increased purely as a gesture of goodwill.

An Older Sister

An older sister is not a reference to a direct relative of any kind in the geisha world. In fact, the term is given to any geisha with at least a single day of seniority over another geisha who is willing to take her under her wing to train her. This more experienced geisha will be responsible for establishing a relationship between herself and the less experienced geisha in training. She will introduce her to the people she needs to know, ensure she is seen in all of the right places, and refer to her as her younger sister from the day of the ceremony forward. The ceremony itself is much like a wedding ceremony. They are bound together in a tea ceremony, and if the older sister does her job as she is supposed to, she will soon be the most important person in her younger sister's life. The older sister will teach her younger sister what kind of makeup to use and how to apply it, introduce her to the best wig makers for performance on the stage and even to chefs at the most popular restaurants. After dark, the older sister will take her younger charge throughout Gion where she will introduce her to customers of hers and mistresses of teahouses, telling them that they should remember her little sister's name as she is sure to be a rising star. If the younger sister misbehaves, it is the older sister who will bear the responsibility for not having educated her better. Though there is much work to do, the older sister will also collect a stipend from anything that the younger sister earns for the duration of her time as a geisha.



The Homeless Eel

Mameha tells Sayuri the story of the homeless eel. It is a story as old as time, told to her by her older sister, and now passed on to Sayuri in the same manner. A man's eel, she tells her, spends its whole life trying to find a suitable home. Women have caves inside them which are the favorite homes of eels. An eel is a territorial creature and once they find a home, they mark their new cave as their territory. There are even some men who do nothing more than search for a variety of caves to live in. Other men search for caves where no eel has lived before. In fact, there is even a name for the first exploration of a cave by an eel, she explains, called 'mizuage.'. In fact, most men believe that a cave that has never been lived in before is particularly special, and some men will even pay a great deal to be the first eel into a new cave.

In this way, Mameha manages to delicately explain the coming of Sayuri's adulthood, and what she can expect from a man in the future and for the rest of her life. While the story confuses Sayuri at first, Mameha explains that the doctor is a wealthy man who spent most of his money in the pursuit of mizuage. He had once paid a record amount for Mameha's mizuage. In fact, two men had bid for her at the time, driving the price higher – a situation that Mameha is now trying to recreate. Sayuri is so young that at first she doesn't understand the significance of mizuage or the reason that it would be so important to a man. Despite Hatsumomo's best efforts to ruin Sayuri's reputation, Mameha manages to secure a bidding war by allowing Doctor 'Crab' to have an independent doctor examine Sayuri to ensure that she is still intact. Once that is established, tarnishing Hatsumomo's reputation by degrees in the process, Sayuri is officially 'marketed' and Doctor 'Crab' wins the bidding for her mizuage.



Styles

Point of View

Memoirs Of A Geisha by Arthur Golden is a novel written entirely in the first person perspective by the geisha named Sayuri, who began her life as a young girl from a small fishing village in Yoroido and was named Chiyo. The story follows her throughout her earlier naiveté, as she first believes she is being adopted into a wealthy family, and then comes to realize her life will be forever changed. Chiyo is sold to a geisha house in Tokyo where she is instructed in the life and manner of geisha, and where she quickly learns that everything she is and all that she has is merely a price tag away from belonging to someone else. At first, she tries to escape, having found her sister in the equivalent of a brothel where she is also for sale to the highest bidder, but her attempts to get away only make her life at the okiya more difficult. She loses her privileges, and her freedom, but more importantly, she loses the right to train as a geisha at all. At first, this is of little concern to her, but then she meets the Chairman in a chance encounter on the street, and the small kindness he shows her that day brings light into her life. She sees the geisha accompanying him and his party, and she realizes in that moment that she would give anything to be her. From then on, everything she does and everything she is centers around that eventual possibility. This story follows her personal account of her trials, triumphs, disappointments, and final success as she manages to accomplish her lifelong goal.

Language and Meaning

This is a novel that is unique in many ways. As it takes place entirely in another culture, it is filled with unfamiliar phrases and descriptions, customs and expectations. The story begins with two young sisters in a small town named Yoroido. This fishing village is the only life they know until they are taken to Tokyo by a virtual stranger who sells them into a form of indentured service. Chiyo, the younger of the two girls, is already a good looking child. Her sister is not as pretty, and as such, they are separated immediately. Chiyo is sent to an okiya where she will learn to be a geisha while Satsu is taken to a jorou-ya where she is expected to provide sexual services to men for a fee. Throughout the novel, there are descriptions that are uniquely Japanese in nature such as the different segments that make up the costume of a geisha; the varied instruments a geisha learns to play in order to entertain; and the ceremonies that are performed as a young girl becomes an apprentice geisha. A geisha is bound to an older sister, sold to the highest bidder for mizuage, and then becomes a full-fledged geisha who is ready for a danna. Many of these customs are unheard of in the western cultures where young ladies who sell themselves to men are considered a lower class of society or prostitute while in the eastern regions of the world, not only were these practices acceptable but expected in order to survive. Parents would willingly give up their daughters to train as geishas, fully aware that their virginity and their companionship would be for sale for the rest of their lives. In this story, Chiyo finally secures the 'danna' she has hoped for her



entire life – one who she has genuine feelings for and who shares those feelings with her. At that time, she retires herself and even has a child with the man who ‘purchases’ her. It is a happy ending to a lifetime of expectation and duty.

Structure

Memoirs of a Geisha by Arthur Golden is a novel of just under four hundred pages, divided into thirty-five chapters. These chapters range in length from seven to fifteen pages, with the average being about eleven pages. Each chapter is structured with two sizes of fonts. The larger font is reserved for Chiyo/Sayuri’s introspection and descriptions, whereas the smaller font is reserved for the story line itself. In this manner, the author manages to avoid confusing time line structures where the main character is either reflecting on past events or feelings. The first two chapters reveal the life that Satsu and Chiyo were born into, describing their home life and their parents and revealing the poverty that is commonplace in the small village of Yoroido. In these two chapters Mr. Tanaka is also introduced. In chapter three, Chiyo and Satsu are taken from the family life they know, and loaded onto a train with a complete stranger who will deliver them to their destination. Chapter four reveals Chiyo’s feelings as she tries to adjust to the separation from Satsu, and her new life in the okiya. The other inhabitants of the okiya are introduced, and the structure of power within the okiya revealed. In chapter five, Chiyo is taken to the Gion Registry Office to register as an apprentice geisha. In chapter six, Chiyo finally learns the fate of her sister Satsu, although at this time still has no understanding for her situation. In chapter seven, Chiyo manages to find Satsu, and together they plan to escape. She also manages to earn further wrath from Hatsumomo, and the fallout is costly to both. In chapter nine, she meets the Chairman for the first time, and resolves to do whatever it takes to become a geisha in order that she might be worthy of spending more time with him. In chapter ten, Mameha talks to Chiyo about returning to the apprenticeship program for geisha. Chapter eleven reveals Mameha approaching Mother with an offer to become her big sister. By chapter fourteen, Chiyo is preparing for her debut as an apprentice geisha. In chapter twenty-three, Mameha has been working with Chiyo for long enough that she has finally shown Mother her value, and the decision to adopt her is announced. The bidding for Chiyo/Sayuri’s mizuage is in full swing. In chapter twenty-eight, the government announces the closing of the geisha districts and war is in full swing. It will be some time before it is safe for Sayuri to return to Gion. In chapter twenty-nine, Nobu visits Sayuri and suggests strongly that she return to the okiya, and by chapter thirty she has returned. It will still be some time before Sayuri realizes her dream, and until then she must help the Chairman and Nobu to reclaim their company and rebuild by swaying the Minister of Finance. She manages to do so, and then she orchestrates a tryst with him to discourage Nobu from becoming her danna and ruining forever her chances of being with the Chairman who finally reveals his feelings for her afterward.



Quotes

So how did a wrinkled old man with an egg for a head father a beautiful girl like you?
-- Mr. Tanaka (Chp 1 paragraph 49)

Importance: This is Chiyo's first indication that she is more than just a poor girl from a little fishing village. By acknowledging her beauty, Mr. Tanaka makes Chiyo think about herself in a different light for the first time.

That ugly sister of yours was here looking for you the other day, and her stench was nearly as bad as yours.
-- Hatsumomo (Chp. 4 paragraph 19)

Importance: This is just one of many ways in which Hatsumomo uses emotional torture to keep Chiyo off balance. It is important in that it reveals that Hatsumomo actually fears Chiyo's presence and how it might affect her standings in the okiyo.

When you look at a mirror, all you see is yourself, but I know a pretty color when I find it.
-- Awajiumi (Chp. 5 paragraph 8)

Importance: This is another example of Chiyo's beauty being acknowledged by another individual, and in this case, rubbed in Hatsumomo's face. It helps to increase Chiyo's confidence incrementally, and undermine Hatsumomo's.

None of us find as much kindness in this world as we should.
-- The Chairman (Chp. 9 paragraph 41)

Importance: This quote is from the first meeting that Chiyo has with the Chairman. His simple kindness at a low point in her life is the inspiration she carries with her for the rest of her lifetime, using it to spur her to become a geisha and to be worthy of finding him again.

I am no more a rival to her than a puddle is a rival to the ocean.
-- Chiyo (Chp. 10 paragraph 50)

Importance: This is just an example of the poor self image that Chiyo has, and it is the highest hurdle she must overcome in order to reach her full potential. When Mameha explains that Hatsumomo is mean to her because she fears the competition and undermines Chiyo's confidence at every opportunity, Chiyo has a hard time believing her. Chiyo believes that she is not worthy to be in the same room let alone competition for Hatsumomo.

I must say, at times I've thought of coming to ask your permission to make her my younger sister.
-- Mameha (Chp. 11 paragraph 35)



Importance: This is Mameha's first approach to Mother at the Nitta okiya, beginning the process of negotiations to re-establish Chiyo as an apprentice geisha. She cannot come right out and express her true interest, or risk that she be taken advantage of, so instead she must plant the seed of her intentions, and hope that it blooms into a profitable offer.

If this girl embarrasses me in public again, I'll be happy to slap the other side of her face.

-- Hatsumomo (Chp. 15 paragraph 28)

Importance: Hatsumomo admits that Sayuri managed to get the better of her in front of others. By slapping Sayuri across the face, she reveals the level of embarrassment that she brought to herself when Sayuri managed to turn the tables on her as she was telling a story meant to belittle Sayuri once again.

If Pumpkin is made daughter of the okiya, her future is assured, and so is Hatsumomo's.

-- Mameha (Chp. 16 paragraph 19)

Importance: Mameha explains the politics and finances involved in Hatsumomo's life where Pumpkin's future is concerned. As Pumpkin's big sister, if Pumpkin were to succeed in the okiya, Hatsumomo would never have to be concerned about life or survival again.

You'll be very fortunate ever to become a geisha with sufficient status for a man like Nobu to consider proposing himself as your danna.

-- Mameha (Chp. 18 paragraph 18)

Importance: Mameha tells Chiyo that her personal feelings have no place in the business of selecting a danna, and should she ever be of sufficient status that Nobu might take enough notice of her to consider himself her danna, she would be very fortunate indeed.

I don't need to tell you what will become of your future if Dr. Crab or Nobu should lose interest in you.

-- Mameha (Chp. 21 paragraph 6)

Importance: Mameha reminds Sayuri that her future is dependent on keeping the interest of the men in her life who have position, power and money. It is by their interest that her life continues comfortably.

Only one man can be the explorer of an undiscovered region, and I want to be that man!

-- The Baron (Chp. 24 paragraph 7)

Importance: The Baron extolls his frustration with his inability to secure the rights to Sayuri's mizuage (virginity). He is only too aware that this is a single use gift.



Two men are equals – true equals – only when they both have equal confidence.
-- Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku (Chp. 27 paragraph 52)

Importance: Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku reveals his secret to success as he explains that to be successful, it is not necessary to defeat the man but only to defeat his confidence. He continues to assert that a man who is troubled by doubt cannot concentrate on deciding a course to victory.

Sometimes we get through adversity only by imagining what the world might be like if our dreams should ever come true.
-- The Chairman (Chp. 31 paragraph 12)

Importance: The Chairman wisely observes that often the greatest hardships are overcome only because of our belief that our dreams may be realized at the end of the ordeal we are facing.

After he found out he wasn't going to be your danna, he sat there a long while like a pile of dirt, and then finally said, 'I thought you told me I would be Sayuri's danna'.
-- Nobu (Chp. 32 paragraph 56)

Importance: Nobu reveals his disgust with the Minister that they spent time with, introducing him to Sayuri and leading him to believe that he might have a chance to become her danna in return for his favorable decision regarding the reopening of Iwamura Electric. When told he could not be her danna, the Minister requested that Nobu try to arrange a single night with her as though Sayuri could be purchased like a common whore.

Every step I have taken in my life since I was a child in Gion, I have taken in the hope of bringing myself closer to you.
-- Sayuri (Chp. 34 paragraph 61)

Importance: Sayuri's confession to the Chairman, finally revealing the feelings she has had for him since their very first meeting on the streets of Gion, and her hopes that any of the steps she took in life would bring him closer to her in some way.